

Parents play key role in whether teen tobacco use becomes daily habit

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Researchers have found new evidence showing that parents play a key role in whether or not their adolescent children who experiment with tobacco progress to become daily smokers before they graduate from high school.

A study published on-line and in the September issue of journal *Pediatrics* shows that [parents](#) can be a positive or negative influence on their children's future [smoking](#) habit.

"If parents really don't want their [children](#) to smoke they need to communicate that by establishing clear guidelines in their families about not smoking and discuss them with their school-age children." said Min

Jung Kim, a research scientist with the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group and lead author of the study.

At the same time, parents can increase their children's chances of smoking by their own use of tobacco.

"If parents smoke, teens have more access to cigarettes than teens who have non-smoking parents. A second preventive measure for smoking parents is to quit smoking themselves," said Kim.

The study included 270 adolescents who had begun smoking by the eighth grade but had not advanced to daily smoking at that time. Daily smoking was defined as smoking one cigarette a day for the past 30 days prior to annual interviews. By the time the students were in the 12th grade, 156, or 58 percent, had become daily smokers.

The children in the study were 51 percent male and 85 percent white. They were drawn from a larger study looking at the development of healthy and problem behaviors among children at 10 suburban schools in the Pacific Northwest. Information about their smoking habits was collected during annual interviews from the seventh through 12th grades.

Aside from parenting and parental tobacco use, other factors that predicted teen smoking were having friends who smoked and involvement in other problems behaviors such as skipping school, getting into fights and engaging in vandalism.

Kim said most smoking prevention programs do not directly address the role of parental smoking or the link between anti-social behavior and smoking, which commonly occur together.

"Parents need to know that they are still important and can make their children feel good when they do something right and also know that

there are consequences when they do something wrong. Many parents think adolescence is the time for children to have their independence. But it is important to maintain good supervision of your teen. Parents who smoke also need to understand that they are modeling behavior and if they quit smoking they send a strong message to their teenager," said Kim.

She recommends that parents "should not ignore children's experimental smoking at any age because it put them at great risk of progressing to daily smoking." To do that, parents should:

- Set and enforce clear guideline about [tobacco](#).
- Monitor to ensure that your children are following your guidelines.
- Know and monitor your children's friends.
- Provide clear, consistent and positive consequences for following those guidelines and appropriate, consistent negative consequences for violating them.

Co-authors of the paper are Charles Fleming and Richard Catalano, of the Social Development Research Group, which is part of the UW's School of Social Work. The research was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Provided by University of Washington ([news](#) : [web](#))

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