

Parents have role in smoking prevention

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Parents shouldn't let up when it comes to discouraging their kids from smoking.

That's the message of a study to be presented Monday, May 2, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Denver.

Previous research has shown that [parents](#) can deter adolescents from smoking by monitoring them and enforcing anti-smoking practices at home. Researchers, led by E. Melinda Mahabee-Gittens, MD, an emergency medicine physician at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, sought to determine if family factors continue to protect adolescents as they grow older and whether these factors affect youths of varying racial/[ethnic backgrounds](#) differently.

Investigators studied 3,473 pairs of white, black and Hispanic parents and nonsmoking youths who participated in the National Survey of Parents and Youth in November 1999-June 2001 (Time 1) and again in July 2002-June 2003 (Time 2). They looked at whether youths remained nonsmokers throughout the study period, and they assessed changes in family factors thought to protect against smoking initiation over time.

Results showed no differences in the rate of smoking initiation between Time 1 and Time 2 by race. In addition, youths in all three racial/ethnic groups reported associating more with peers who smoked at Time 2 than at Time 1.

The levels of protective family factors decreased significantly from

Time 1 to Time 2 across all racial/ethnic groups in both smokers and nonsmokers. However, levels of protective factors were consistently higher in nonsmoking youths compared to smokers. Continued, higher levels of connectedness and monitoring by parents decreased the risk of smoking initiation by as much as 30 percent in both whites and Hispanics.

Meanwhile, decreases in the following family factors from Time 1 to Time 2 were associated with an increased risk that youths would start smoking: 1) punishment: up to 43 percent increased risk in all three racial/ethnic groups; 2) monitoring: 42 percent increased risk in blacks only; and 3) connectedness: up to 26 percent increased risk in both blacks and [Hispanics](#).

"Even though the level of protective family factors decreased as [youth](#) grew older, they remained important in continuing to protect against smoking initiation," said Dr. Mahabee-Gittens, who is also associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati. "These findings support smoking prevention interventions that encourage parents of all three racial/ethnic groups to enforce consistent consequences of smoking behavior, and encourage continued monitoring and connectedness in minority groups."

More information: To view the abstract, go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view.php?nu=PAS11L1_280

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