

Most regret ever starting smoking

July 23 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- The majority of smokers and ex-smokers – 85 per cent – regret ever starting the potentially deadly habit in the first place, show new data from Cancer Research UK published today.

The YouGov survey of 4099 (including 1746 current and ex-[smokers](#)) men and women in the UK also showed that over three quarters of these smokers (77 per cent) took up [smoking](#) regularly when they were still only teenagers – some as young as 13.

And a third chose to smoke the same brand of cigarettes as their family and friends when they first started buying a specific brand regularly.

This data adds to the growing evidence of support behind Cancer Research UK's campaign, The Answer is Plain, to remove all glitzy, glamorous branding from cigarette packets while keeping the health warnings.

More than two thirds of the British public (68 per cent) support the campaign which aims to protect children from the last bastion of [tobacco](#) marketing.

Mary Beecham, a 62 year old grandmother from Leigh on Sea in Essex, said: “I started smoking when I was 14 because it was the thing to do and I wanted to fit in and look the part. If I'd realised how hard it would be to stop I would never have started in the first place. I've tried to give up several times but it's an addiction I can't break. We need to do all we can to protect young people and stop them from picking up the habit – I only

wish I'd managed to stop myself having that first cigarette.”

Jean King, Cancer Research UK's director of tobacco control, said: "This survey shows just how addictive tobacco can be with most smokers wishing they'd never started in the first place. With so many smokers starting at a young age, everything possible must be done to remove the remaining forms of tobacco marketing via glitzy, colourful cigarette packs that are designed to attract young people.

“Tobacco is highly addictive and is very hard to quit – especially if people have started at such a young age. And we know smoking kills one in two long term users.”

Sarah Woolnough, director of policy at Cancer Research UK, said: “We have a unique opportunity to protect children from the marketing of this deadly product. This is about us as a society saying that it is wrong for tobacco – a product that kills half of all its long term users – to be marketed to children as though it were a bag of sweets. We know that standardised packs with large health warnings make cigarettes less attractive to young people and the dangers of smoking clearer. We urge the Government to introduce plain packaging as soon as possible.”

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Most regret ever starting smoking (2012, July 23) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-most-regret-ever-starting-smoking.html>

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