

## More than 200,000 UK children start smoking every year (w/ Video)

March 22 2013

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Around 207,000 children aged 11-15 start smoking in the UK every year according to new research published today (Friday).

This means that nearly 570 children are lighting up and becoming smokers for the first time every day.

The new Cancer Research UK figures show this number has jumped by an extra 50,000 from the previous year, when 157,000 started [smoking](#).

Analysis of the data showed that the 2010 figure was unusually low and this most recent figure is similar to the numbers seen in the late 2000s.

Around 27 per cent of all under 16s have tried smoking at least once – equivalent to one million children. Eight out of ten adult smokers start

before they turn 19.

And the figures show that older children smoke more than younger ones.

A survey among 12 year olds in 2010 found none were regular smokers, one per cent smoked occasionally and two per cent said they used to smoke.

But a year later in 2011 among the same age group of children, now aged 13, two per cent were found to smoke regularly, four per cent smoked occasionally and three per cent said they used to smoke.

Half of all long term smokers will die from tobacco related illness. Around 100,000 people are killed by smoking in the UK each year.

With so many children starting to smoke each year, Cancer Research UK is urging the government to commit to plain, standardised packaging of tobacco. Research has shown that children find the plain packs less appealing and are less likely to be misled by the sophisticated marketing techniques designed to make smoking attractive to youngsters.

A public consultation on the future of tobacco packaging closed in August 2012 and there has been no decision announced from the government on whether this will proceed.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy and information, said: "With such a large number of [youngsters](#) starting to smoke every year, urgent action is needed to tackle the [devastation](#) caused by tobacco. Replacing slick, brightly coloured packs that appeal to children with standard packs displaying prominent health warnings, is a vital part of efforts to protect health. Reducing the appeal of cigarettes with plain, standardised packs will give millions of children one less reason to start smoking.

"These figures underline the importance of sustained action to discourage young people from starting. Smoking kills and is responsible for at least 14 different types of cancer. Standardised packaging is popular with the public and will help protect [children](#). We urge the government to show their commitment to health and introduce plain, standardised packs as soon as possible."

**More information:** [www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer ...  
ng/smoking/#children](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer/smoking/#children)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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