

Young social smokers more likely to become adult daily smokers

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

Young people who have a cigarette occasionally—even just at weekends— have almost four times the odds of becoming a daily smoker by their late 30s compared to their non-smoking peers, according to new University of Otago research.

The finding, published in an article in the journal *Nicotine & Tobacco*

Research, emerges from the renowned Dunedin Study, which has followed the health and development of around 1,000 people born in Dunedin in 1972-73.

The Dunedin Study has tracked the [smoking](#) habits of its members, including those at 21 and 38 years of age. At 21-years-old, about 10% of the group said they usually smoked weekly but not every day.

"At age 21, these occasional smokers tended to think it would be easy to quit smoking, and while some of them did manage to quit successfully, many were still smoking by [age](#) 38 and around 13 per cent of them were smoking every day by that stage," says Lindsay Robertson, the article's lead researcher.

People who smoked occasionally also tended to think of themselves as a being a "non-smoker". "Because they don't smoke every day, they might think there isn't much harm in having a cigarette now and then. But when you look at it over the long-term, the risk of becoming a regular smoker is certainly there," says Miss Robertson.

The study also found that about a third of the 21-year-olds who were smoking five [cigarettes](#) or less a day became heavier smokers over the 17-year follow-up period.

More information: "Non-daily, low-rate daily and high-rate daily smoking in young adults: A 17 year follow-up." *Nicotine Tob Res* first published online August 5, 2015 [DOI: 10.1093/ntr/ntv167](https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntv167)

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