

# School activities may be key to tobacco cessation for Native American adolescents

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Native American adolescents have higher rates of cigarette smoking than other racial or ethnic groups. New research from the University of Missouri on the smoking habits of Native American adolescents finds that family warmth and support, as well as participation in school activities, can play a role in tobacco prevention.

"Tobacco use among all adolescents has been declining; however, we are still seeing higher rates in Native American populations," said Mansoo Yu, associate professor of social work and public health in the School of Social Work. "This study was focused on understanding what may predict tobacco use in this population to determine better intervention programs to help curb teenage smoking among vulnerable populations living on American and Canadian reservations."

The study collected data from more than 600 youth aged 10-13 years from rural reservations in the U.S. and Canada over a three-year period. Yu found that for adolescents engaged in less than monthly, or occasional, tobacco use, family warmth and support were indicators of decreased rates of occasional smoking over time. Furthermore, being engaged in school through positive activities was found to be a preventive tool in stopping nonsmokers and occasional smokers from becoming frequent smokers. Yu also found that unlike other racial and ethnic youths, Native American females were more likely than their male peers to smoke occasionally and frequently across time.

Yu hopes this research will help existing [tobacco control programs](#) for adolescent smokers to be more successful as the findings provide predictors of smoking status. The results over time found that the intention to smoke, best friends' smoking habits, deviant behaviors, alcohol use and marijuana use all were common risk factors for both occasional and frequent smoking. Depressive symptoms were found to be a predictor of frequent smoking only, meaning those at risk for depression had higher odds of becoming frequent smokers than those without depressive symptoms.

"Promoting family warmth and support was found to be an effective way to help occasional smokers quit, while promoting positive school activities may prevent nonsmokers or [occasional smokers](#) from becoming frequent smokers," Yu said. "This is helpful information for families, schools, social workers and [public health](#) officials that are looking for ways to decrease [smoking](#) on reservations and in indigenous communities. Family influence is critical here, as many Native American tribes have strong and cohesive family units. With support and encouragement of children to be involved in school, whether through clubs or sports, we could see a decrease in [tobacco](#) use among Native American adolescents."

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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