

[IMAGE]

## **Friends Don't Let Friends Smoke**

With the horrific health consequences of primary and secondhand smoking well-established, you would think more people would get the hint and take up healthier habits. But choosing not to smoke, or quitting once you've started isn't always as easy as it sounds. All too often, the cause of a lifetime of adult smoking is caused by peer pressure as a youth.

Fortunately, that same peer pressure may also help steer people away from smoking at an early age. In a study supported by the Arizona Department of Health Services, Tobacco Education and Prevention Program, 19 schools completed the "Champs Have and Model Positive Peer Skills" (CHAMPS) program, utilizing educators and community representatives administering activities as part of an awareness campaign. Preferred program organizers consisted of those thought to be highly influential on teens - their peers.

At the beginning and end of the school year, 1,412 students at grades 5, 6 and 7 were surveyed, then compared with a group from six schools that had not been exposed to the "pressure." In the schools that participated in the prevention program, the percentage of students who said they would smoke a cigarette if offered by a friend increased minimally: from 1.3 percent to 2 percent. By comparison, the percentage of students who said they would smoke a cigarette increased from .06 percent to 4.6 percent in schools not involved in the in program.

If you're a current smoker, talk to your doctor about practical ways to kick your habit for good. And if you have children, let them know about the profound dangers of smoking, and find out if their school has a prevention program in place. If not, you may want to suggest they develop one.

### *Reference:*

Sciacca J, Eng H, Mahrt J, et al. The Arizona CHAMPS Peer Project for Tobacco Use Prevention: effects on tobacco use, intentions to use, and knowledge. *American Journal of Health Education* September/October 2003.

For more information on the dangers of smoking, visit  
[www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/smoking/index.html](http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/smoking/index.html).

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