

[IMAGE]

Young Adults Need Anti-Smoking Messaging, Too

By Editorial Staff

It's an ugly statistic: Nearly 9 out of 10 adults who smoke cigarettes daily first try smoking by age 18, and 99 percent first try smoking by age 26," according to the CDC. Now ask the average person which age group is the overwhelm focus of anti-smoking efforts: younger than age 18 or older? It seems reasonable to assume most would pick the younger group, and for good reason. However, new research indicates we shouldn't be ignoring members of the older category – particularly young adults. Here's why.

According to a long-term analysis involving nearly 72,000 U.S. adults ages 18-23, "the proportion of smokers who initiated cigarette smoking in early adulthood more than doubled between 2002 and 2018 [from 20.6% to more than 42%], and the proportion of daily cigarette smokers who transitioned to daily smoking in early adulthood also increased from 38.7% in 2002 to 55.9% in 2018."

The study authors' conclusion emphasizes the point dramatically: "Recent nationwide efforts to prevent cigarette smoking initiation have largely targeted youth, neglecting the vulnerable young adult population. ... A substantial proportion of beginning smokers and most new daily smokers are now young adults, reflecting a shift from adolescence to early adulthood, a population segment once considered beyond the critical risk period for cigarette smoking onset."

The bottom line: Young adults aren't "out of the woods" when it comes to the perils of smoking; in fact, they appear to be getting themselves deeper "into the woods" according to these sobering statistics. If you're the parent of a young adult, or a young adult yourself, heed the warnings, even if they seem directed more toward the younger crowd these days. Smoking isn't just dangerous; it's deadly. If you've already initiated smoking, your doctor can give you the encouragement and resources to help you quit before you join an even worse statistic - the percentage of smokers who die early because of their addiction (approximately one in five deaths per year, 10 years before nonsmokers, on average).

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