



## PARENTS SMOKE, KIDS DON'T

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Parents who can't quit smoking can still take decisive action to prevent their kids from smoking.

A new study, entitled "Enabling Parents Who Smoke to Prevent Their Children From Initiating Smoking," shows that prevention in the home works for children of tobacco users. The study, conducted over three years, consisted of 776 children and their parents and was published in the January issue of the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. **It shows that kids whose parents smoke were half as likely to try cigarettes if their parents instituted a home-based anti-smoking program.**

Parents' smoking habits can greatly increase the risk of their children smoking. Research shows that if one or both parents smoke, children may have at least twice the risk of becoming habitual smokers by the time they graduate from high school.

"The fact that parents who smoke can exert a protective anti-smoking effect on their children might seem counter-intuitive," said the author of the study. "Other research has already found that strong parental attitudes and actions against smoking reduce the odds of children using tobacco. Our study found that the same is true even when the parents themselves are smokers."

Parents, not peers or siblings, are the primary socializing influences during the childhood years, particularly when it comes to personal activities such as diet, physical activity, media use, sexuality and substance abuse, including tobacco use.

But socializing kids against smoking requires much more than just telling them not to do it. The anti-smoking program that was studied, Smoke-Free Kids, consists of six activity guides for parents and their children ages 8-10 that included games, contests and role-playing. The purpose is to increase effective communication about smoking between parents and kids, including an honest exchange about the parents' smoking history and addiction and why that relates to expected abstinence among children.

Smoke-Free Kids was not designed to get parents to quit smoking, although 15% of the parents involved in the study did quit by the end of the three-year period. However, whether or not a parent quit smoking did not have an impact on the program's success in deterring kids from smoking.

"Parents who smoke feel guilty about being role models for smoking; they feel hypocritical about trying to prevent their children from smoking," says the study author. "For these reasons, it's difficult to persuade parents who smoke to become anti-smoking advocates in the home. Still most parents who smoke ardently hope that their children do not smoke. Public health educators and pediatricians should make a special effort to help parents who smoke take action, so that their children won't face the same deadly health threat that they face."

Visit the Smoke-Free Kids program at: <http://www.familyhealthresearch.org/index.aspx> for more information on the study and the program.

(Source: jointogether.org, 1-12-06)

