

Every Year Over 200,000 Kids In The UK Start Smoking

The number of kids starting to smoke has risen by 50,000 in just one year, new research suggests.

Approximately 207,000 children ranging in age from 11 to 15 years began smoking in 2011, a significant increase from 157,000 in 2010, according to data from Cancer Research UK.

Each day 570 kids are lighting up and becoming smokers for the first time.

After examination of the data, it was revealed that the 2010 figure was surprisingly low and the most recent number is a more accurate display of those seen during the first few years of this century.

Among children under the age of 16, twenty-seven percent have tried smoking at least once - which is equal to around one million children. Eight out of every 10 adult smokers began before the age of 19.

A survey conducted among 12-year-olds in 2010 revealed that none were regular smokers - one percent smoked on occasion and two percent said they used to be smokers.

However, in 2011 among the same age group - kids who then turned 13 - two percent were found to smoke regularly, four percent smoked on occasion, and three percent had previously smoked.

Half of all regular smokers will die from illness associated with tobacco use. **Close to 100,000 people die from smoking annually in the U.K.**

According to research published in *Tobacco Control*, British children are exposed to millions of tobacco messages and images every week on prime time TV, despite a ban on direct tobacco-product advertising which became law decades ago.

Because of the number of kids beginning to smoke each year, Cancer Research UK is asking the government to commit to a plain, regulated packaging of tobacco. Previous studies have proven that kids find the plain packs less attractive and are less likely to be deceived by the intense marketing techniques used by companies to lure kids into the world of smoking.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy and information, said:

"With such a large number of youngsters starting to smoke every year, urgent action is needed to tackle the devastation caused by tobacco. Replacing slick, brightly coloured packs that appeal to children with standard packs displaying prominent health warnings, is a vital part of efforts to protect health. Reducing the appeal of cigarettes with plain, standardised packs will give millions of children one less reason to start smoking.

These figures underline the importance of sustained action to discourage young people from starting. Smoking kills and is responsible for at least 14 different types of cancer. Standardised packaging is popular with the public and will help protect children. We urge the government to show their commitment to health and introduce plain, standardised packs as soon as possible."

Written by Kelly Fitzgerald

Copyright: Medical News Today