

Fact Sheet #8: Young Adults and Cessation

Compared to their share of the smoking population, 18-24 year olds are the most likely to attempt to quit.¹

What is Happening?

- According to California's most recent estimates, 18-24 year olds have the highest smoking prevalence of any age group at 23.6%.²
- Of the over 11 million young adult smokers in the United States, 72.9% reported they want to quit and 52.5% have quit for at least one day.³
- There is a definitive lack of cessation resources targeted specifically at young adults, despite the tobacco industry's focus on recruiting and maintaining young adult smokers.⁴

D-I-Y Quit Kits

You don't have to pay to purchase fancy quit kits to distribute. You can put together quit kits yourself at a fraction of the price that can still appeal to the young adult age group. Here are some items that you might want to include:

- Gum, breath mints, or toothpicks: items that can keep a smoker's lips occupied during a strong, sudden craving, are a must in any quit kit.
- Hand putty or stress ball: these can keep a smoker's hands busy while not holding a cigarette.
- Quit smoking guide: this guide should include information about setting quit goals, how to create a support system to quit, and manage cravings. A successful quit smoking guide will give smokers enough information to quit independently from any other resources besides those included in the quit kit.
- Cost of smoking calculator: by listing the financial costs of smoking, the benefits to quitting, and the alternatives to smoking in different situations, the cost of smoking calculator can give smokers a constant pocket-size reminder as to why they quit.
- Local quit resources: if a smoker needs more assistance than a quit kit, make sure they have references to your local resources for quitting - local county or ALA cessation classes, online resources, and the California Smokers' Helpline number.

What the Tobacco Industry Knows About Quitting

The tobacco industry has been researching young adult smoking and cessation patterns for years. A recent article in the Journal of Internal Medicine entitled "Tobacco Industry Research on Smoking Cessation" explored the tobacco industry document archives and concluded:

- **Young adult smokers are the most likely age group to quit.** Some of the characteristics of quitters, such as casual or light smoking, purchasing cigarettes by the pack instead of the carton, and smoking Marlboros, are also characteristics shared by young adults in general.
- **Potential quitters have negative attitudes about smoking.** They are often embarrassed about smoking and uncomfortable smoking in front of non smokers.
- **Low tar smokers say they will quit more, but actually quit less.** One study also noted that low tar cigarettes might actually lure former smokers back into the market.
- **The main reason young smokers say they quit is for health reasons.** Additionally, concern for the health of others, price reasons, and physical fitness were more likely to be noted as the reason they quit by younger smokers. 82.5% of young adult quitters reported they used the "cold turkey" method to quit, compared to 69.9% of older quitters.
- **Nicotine-free cigarettes were developed and tested in response to young adult quitters' concerns about price, nicotine addiction, and social acceptability.** Consumers felt a nicotine-free or reduced nicotine cigarette could be a healthier alternative to standard cigarettes and could promote quitting.

The high rate of quit attempts combined with the high failure rate among young adults indicates there is an unmet need for cessation programs. Researchers' recommendations included targeting casual smokers and brand switchers for cessation interventions, educating about the false health images associated with low tar and "natural" cigarettes, and encouraging smokers not ready to quit to maintain smoke-free environments at home, work, and in cars. Finally, advocates can use young adult perceptions about smoking and quitting identified in tobacco industry research to create campaigns that speak directly to this age group.

Stay tuned...More Fact Sheets Are Coming Your Way

¹ Ling PM MD, MPH, Glantz SA PHD. Tobacco Industry Research on Smoking Cessation. Journal of General Internal Medicine. 2004 May; 19(5P1): 419-426.

² California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. "18-24 Year Olds." 2003.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.



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