



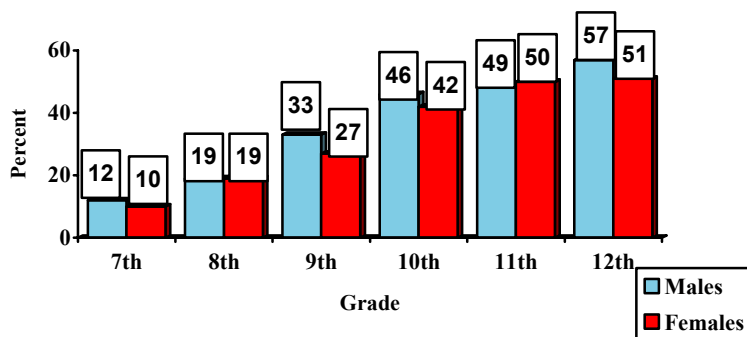
# Parents Make A Difference!

## Teens and Tobacco

October 2002

Nationwide, over 36% of 7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade teens smoke cigarettes and by age 13 over 25% of teens have tried cigarettes. Research from the recent Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) of 5,704 7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> graders shows that 35% of our teens have tried cigarettes. The chart below illustrates the percentage of teens who have tried smoking tobacco at each grade level.

Southwest Wisconsin Teens Who Have Tried Smoking Tobacco



SWYS indicates that only one in five of our teens currently smoke and that 27% of males and 5% of females have tried chewing tobacco.

Although the number of teens smoking in southwest Wisconsin is below the national average, those who do smoke are at risk for addiction and other health related problems. Teens who use tobacco are also more likely to use other drugs including alcohol.

### Parents Make A Difference!

Research from SWYS has found that one way parents can make a difference in teen tobacco use is by sharing their values on teen smoking. This chart shows that 70% of teens who agree that their

teens did not know how their parents felt about teen smoking. This group of teens behaved as if their parents felt it was acceptable for teens their age to smoke.

### Why Teens Smoke

It is helpful for parents who wish to reduce the likelihood that their teen will try and/or use tobacco to understand why teens smoke. Some of the reasons teens give for starting to smoke are:

- to fit in, be part of a group
- to look cool or be popular
- to look and act older
- to be like someone they know and/or admire who smokes
- to be rebellious
- to experiment, just to try it

People who smoke often say that tobacco can make them feel more active and alert, it can make them feel calm and relaxed and they get a get a rush or buzz from the nicotine.

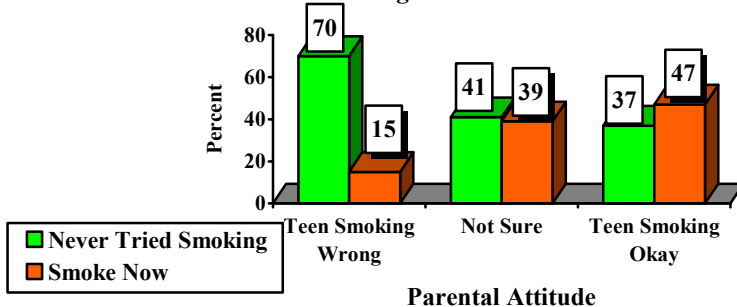
### Is Your Child at Risk?

Your child could be at risk for smoking if you notice the following:

- ❖ You find out your child's friends have tried smoking;
- ❖ Your child's grades begin to suffer or your child doesn't take pride in his/her work anymore;
- ❖ Your child shows a lack of interest in school and community activities;

(more)

Teen Smoking and Parent Attitudes



parents think it is wrong for teens their age to smoke have not tried smoking tobacco, while only 37% of the teens who say their parents think it is okay for teens their age to smoke tobacco have not tried smoking tobacco. SWYS found that almost one in ten

- ❖ Your child has a low self-image. Behavior or feelings associated with a low self-image may include: failure to take responsibility for decisions, lack of confidence in his or her abilities and the inability to recognize love and support from family members and close friends.

### Good News

The good news about teen smoking from SWYS is that the majority of southwest Wisconsin teens do not smoke or use chewing tobacco. Perhaps a more important finding is that parents make a difference in teen tobacco use. In addition to the data which found that teens who believe their parents think it is wrong for teens their age to smoke are less likely to smoke, several other parenting practices were linked to lower rate of tobacco use among teens in southwest Wisconsin. These practices include:

- ❖ **Family love and support.** Teens who agree that their family loves them and gives them support when they need it were less likely to report smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco.
- ❖ **Parental monitoring.** Teens who said their parents were more consistent about knowing where their teen went at night, knowing what their teen and his/her friends were planning to do, knowing their teen's friends and the parents of their teen's friends were less likely to use tobacco.
- ❖ **Establishing and enforcing consequences** for violating family rules. Teens who report their parents consistently establish and enforce consequences for violating family rules were less likely to use tobacco.
- ❖ **Eating meals together as a family.** Teens who report eating three or more dinners per week as a family were less likely to use tobacco.
- ❖ **Reporting school code violations.** Teens who said that their parents would report them if they violated a school code (behavior, academic, athletic or activity) were less likely to use tobacco, regardless of whether or not parents would assign consequences at home.

"Parents Make a Difference" is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This newsletter is adapted from the UW-Extension "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" Teens and Tobacco newsletter which was originally written by Mary Huser, Donna Doll Yogerest, Karen Hintz and Stephen Small. This issue of "Parents Make a Difference" was written by Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County and edited by Ruth Schriefer and Deb Ivey UW-Extension Iowa County and Christina Kenney, UW-Extension Grant County. Thanks are extended to the 5,704 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2001 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html> for more information, or by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391.

## TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT TOBACCO

**Focus on the immediate consequences of tobacco use.** Teens live in the present and they tend to believe the long term effects of smoking won't affect them. Talk to them about how *smoking causes bad breath, yellow teeth, smelly clothes and hair, stained fingers and gross sounding coughs. Chewing tobacco is just as unattractive.*

**Talk about the impact on performance.** *Teens who smoked often have shortness of breath and run out of energy faster than non-smokers. Teens who chew also run out of energy faster.*

**Talk about the chemicals that are in cigarettes.** *Cigarette smoke contains ammonia (used to clean toilets), cyanide (used to kill rats), and formaldehyde (used to preserve dead frogs). Some of the same chemicals are found in chewing tobacco.*

**Emphasize that most teens don't smoke.** National, state and local surveys find that most teens don't smoke and that most teens don't chew tobacco.

**Bring up the tobacco industry.** *The tobacco industry tries to manipulate young people into believing that smoking and chewing are attractive. Does your teen like to be manipulated?*

**Don't use the argument that smoking is an adult decision.** Teens often start smoking and chewing to look and act older, so this argument doesn't work. Very few adults actually decide to smoke as most became addicted as teenagers.

**Don't leave the decision to smoke or chew up to them.** When tobacco use is presented as something youth can decide for themselves, it implies the decision is not important to parents.