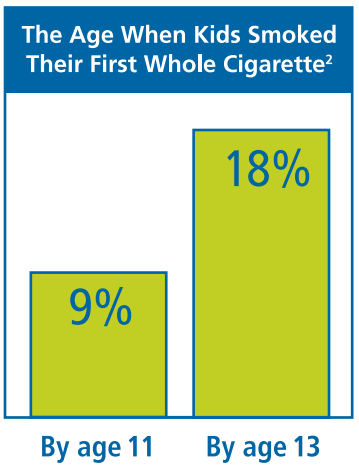

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003). *2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results*

Talking to pre-teens about not smoking

By Lawrence Kutner, Ph.D.

The younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to become addicted.[1] A recent national survey of teenagers found that 18 percent reported that they had smoked at least one cigarette before they were 13 years old.[2]

That's why it's so important to start talking to your children about not smoking while they're still very young, to tailor your approach to their stage of development, and to continue those talks throughout their adolescence.[3,4] On issues related to smoking, pre-teens are more influenced by their parents than by their friends.[5,6]

Your opinions and guidance really count during this stage of your children's development. They may act bored or even roll their eyes when you bring up health-related issues, but they're really listening to what you have to say. Don't be discouraged.

➤ *See back page for tips* ➤

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Youth Smoking Prevention™
Philip Morris USA

Tips for Parents

In addition to talking about the significant health risks of smoking, there are some issues that are especially relevant to pre-teens. Children this age often look for ways to test their independence and to show how mature they are. That's why some try smoking. Here are some tips that can help you be more effective when you talk to them about the reasons for not smoking:

- Let your child know that ***smoking is not common***. Children who smoke tend to overestimate the number of teenagers who smoke.[7] Talk about how ***the large majority of teens do not smoke*** and why they choose not to do it.
- Talk about how ***using tobacco will limit how well they do in sports and other activities***. Describe how it affects their stamina and breathing, especially during competition or performance.
- Emphasize how ***smoking means that they have less money to spend on other things*** they want. Calculate how much cigarettes cost and what else they could buy with that money.
- Discuss how smoking ***is not a sign of maturity***. Most adults are non-smokers. Many who do smoke wish they'd never started. Real maturity means standing up to social pressure.
- Talk about how ***it's okay to say no*** to someone who offers you a cigarette, even if it's a friend. After all, a real friend wouldn't give you something that could harm your health. Practice "refusal skills" so that your children feel comfortable and confident saying no if someone offers them tobacco.

Talk to your kids about not smoking. They'll listen.

Resources for Parents from Philip Morris USA

For more information, please visit the Parent Resource Center at **www.philipmorrisusa.com** where you'll find tools and tips from child development experts to help you talk to your kids about not smoking.

You can also download copies of resources in the *Raising Kids Who Don't Smoke* series, including:

- *Raising kids who don't smoke*
- *Peer pressure & smoking*
- *Could your kid be smoking?*
- *Educando a los niños para que no fumen*
- *¿Podría su hijo estar fumando?*

as well as more parent Tip Sheets like this one.

Additional Resources

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Office of the Surgeon General
www.surgeongeneral.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
"What You Need to Know: Younger Students Still Smoking"
http://family.samhsa.gov/set/stillsmoking.aspx

Note: Website addresses and content are subject to change. This Tip Sheet contains citations to a number of third-party information sources. The inclusion of these sources and websites in no way indicates their endorsement, support or approval of the contents of this Tip Sheet or the policies and positions of Philip Morris USA and its Youth Smoking Prevention department.

This Tip Sheet was created for parents on behalf of Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention by K&O Communications in conjunction with an expert advisory board. As the manufacturer of a product intended for adults who smoke that has serious health effects, Philip Morris USA is committed to helping prevent kids from smoking cigarettes. We have a dedicated Youth Smoking Prevention department that supports positive youth development programs, produces advertising for parents and conducts research to help prevent youth smoking.

References:

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003). *2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results.* Retrieved May 18, 2005 from http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/data/2003/yrbs2003codebook.pdf. Percentage of 9-12th graders who reported smoking a whole cigarette for the first time before the ages of 11 and 13.
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4. Cohen, D.A., Richardson, J., and LeBree, L. (1994). Parenting behaviors and the onset of smoking and alcohol use: A longitudinal study. *Pediatrics, 94*(3), 368-75.
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