

THE NATIONAL YOUTH SMOKING CESSATION SURVEY

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OVERVIEW

The National Youth Smoking Cessation Survey (NYSCS) is a two-year longitudinal telephone study of adolescent and young adult cigarette smokers aged 16-24. Funded by RWJF, CDC, and NCI, this national study will help to fill a critical gap in knowledge by: providing insight into adolescent and young adult quitting behavior; tracking changes in quitting behavior over time; and clarifying preferences for different types of assisted quitting interventions. Young smokers, like adults, want to quit smoking---but unlike adults, have limited experience with access to smoking cessation programs and services. This project is designed to provide timely feedback about the unique quitting dynamics of young smokers to pave the way for more effective interventions.

Data from the baseline survey are now available. Westat, Inc. interviewed 2,582 respondents for the baseline survey, which was conducted from July 2003 – November 2003. The overall response rate for all age-eligible smoking youth was 71.8%. The one-year follow-up began in July 2004. Results are unique in providing a profile of young smokers' quitting efforts.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH SMOKING CESSATION SURVEY BASELINE HEADLINERS

(All smokers, regardless of the number of cigarettes smoked in a lifetime)

- Almost all young smokers (77%) have tried to quit at least once. Some (36%) have tried to quit three or more times. Another 11% have seriously thought about quitting but have not yet tried to quit.
- Over one-quarter (28%) of young smokers are ready to quit now---that is, in the next thirty days, and another 34% are contemplating quitting in the next six months.
- 45% are highly confident that they can quit --- and they may be unrealistic about their success:
 - Many young smokers (62%) live with other smokers.
 - Many young smokers may need help with other high-risk behaviors and/or co-morbidities. For example:
 - 58% binge drink at least once a month
 - 55% felt depressed at least one day in the past week
 - 15% are diagnosed with ADD/ADHD.
 - Few community programs or services exist specifically for young smokers---and if they do exist, young smokers who have tried to quit have little experience with these programs:
 - One-quarter (25%) of young smokers aged 18-24 have used nicotine replacement products.
 - One-fifth (20%) of young smokers who have tried to quit at least once have ever talked with a health professional about quitting.
 - Only 5% have seen a counselor for help to quit, only 3% have attended a community class or program, only 2% have called a telephone help line, and only 1% have used the Internet.
 - Some young smokers who have tried to quit mistakenly have switched to light cigarettes (28%) or chewing tobacco (7%) to help them quit.
 - Many young smokers who have tried to quit, have used techniques that be helpful, but population-based evidence is lacking that such techniques assist quitting in this age group. For example:
 - 88% have cut down on the number of cigarettes they smoke every day.
 - 52% have exercised more.
 - 47% have tried to quit with a friend.
- On the other hand, most smokers (69%) are aware of services and programs to help them quit.

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