

The University of Michigan's *Monitoring the Future Survey* found that smoking increased by 30% among 8th graders in a recent 4-year period.

Another study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has determined that more than 3,000 youth under the age of 18 now become regular smokers each day.

And, Join Together, a national resource center for communities working to reduce substance abuse, is reporting that each year merchants illegally sell 947 million packs of cigarettes to minors and 26 million containers of chewing tobacco.

Longitudinal research found that Project ALERT curbed occasional, weekly and daily cigarette smoking among pre-program cigarette experimenters and achieved a 50 - 60% reduction of heavy smoking among experimenters.

Intervention Plays a Role

In contrast to Project ALERT's prevention focus, Core Lesson 10: Smoking Cessation is directed at a specific group - regular smokers. It helps motivate them to stop smoking and models successful quitting behavior.

The lesson is included for two key reasons:

- While most young people don't smoke, there are plenty of middle grade students who do. According to the *1998 Monitoring the Future Survey*, 19.1% of all 8th graders smoked cigarettes in the last month.
- Research shows that we can avoid alienating current users by including a lesson on smoking cessation that acknowledges that some middle schoolers do smoke.

Something for Everyone

Lesson 10 is designed to benefit all students. It drives home the nature of addiction and provides additional motivation not to experiment.

Many middle schoolers are concerned about their friends or family members who smoke. The smoking cessation lesson gives guidance to nonsmokers on how to help others quit.

In addition, it provides everyone with a model of how to go about changing other habits or unhealthy behavior - overeating, biting nails, shoplifting, drinking, eating too much junk food, cheating or fighting with parents.

Short-term Versus Long-term

Project ALERT stresses the immediate and short-term consequences of substance use because research on adolescents indicates that teenagers tend to discount long-term risks. Activities stress how drugs can affect students now in their daily lives and social relationships.

There are numerous immediate benefits, if a smoker quits. Typical lists generated by students include the following good things you get from quitting:

- breathe better
- whiter teeth
- not nervous
- better health
- don't smell
- family happy
- better at sports
- don't lose friends
- save money

The American Lung Association has identified health benefits that follow within minutes and days of quitting, as well as long-term benefits.

After Quitting For:

20 Minutes

- Blood pressure decreases
- Pulse rate drops
- Body temperature of hands and feet increases

8 Hours

- Carbon monoxide level in blood drops to normal
- Oxygen level in blood increases to normal

24 Hours

- Chance of heart attack decreases

48 Hours

- Nerve endings start re-growing
- Ability to smell and taste is enhanced

2 Weeks to 3 Months

- Circulation improves
- Walking becomes easier
- Lung function increases

1 to 9 Months

- Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, shortness of breath decrease

1 Year

- Excess risk of coronary heart disease is decreased to half that of a smoker

5 to 15 Years

- Stroke risk is reduced to that of someone who has never smoked
- Risk of lung cancer drops to as little as half that of a smoker
- Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas decreases
- Risk of ulcer decreases

There are many good sources of information, locally available intervention programs and self-help programs to help someone quit smoking. For more information, check out www.quitnet.org.