

TRENDS IN TOBACCO USE AMONG YOUTH

- Each day, more than 3,000 young people begin to smoke — or more than 1 million each year. Most of the new smokers who replace the smokers who quit or die prematurely from smoking-related disease are children or teens.¹
- The prevalence of cigarette smoking among high school seniors remained virtually unchanged from 1981 through 1990. In 1992, 17% of both male and female high school seniors were daily cigarette smokers.²
- Almost 75% of daily smokers in high school still smoke 7 to 9 years later, even though only 5% had thought they would definitely be smoking 5 years later.³
- In 1989, about 64% of teenagers who are current smokers had made at least one serious attempt to quit.⁴
- About 90% of smokers born since 1935 started smoking before age 21 and almost 50% started before age 18.⁵
- Use of smokeless tobacco among youth is a growing problem. Between 1970 and 1986, the use of snuff increased 15 times and the use of chewing tobacco 4 times among males aged 17–19 years.⁵
- Many factors interact to encourage cigarette smoking among youth, including smoking by peers and family members, tobacco advertising and promotion, and easy availability of cigarettes.³
- The most consistent influence on cigarette use among adolescents is having friends who smoke. About 80% of adolescent smokers report having at least one close friend who smokes. About 20% of adolescent who don't smoke report having at least one close friend who smokes.⁴
- About half of adolescent smokers have parents who smoke. Teenagers are three times more likely to smoke if their parents and at least one older sibling smoke.⁶
- About 85% of adolescent smokers who buy their own cigarettes usually buy Marlboro, Newport, or Camel cigarettes, the most heavily marketed brands.⁷
- White high school seniors are on average five times more likely to smoke than black high school seniors. Smoking prevalence among Hispanics falls in between.²
- Among male high school seniors, the prevalence of smoking half a pack of cigarettes or more a day is 18% among Native Americans, compared with 12% among whites, 5% among Mexican-Americans, 4% among Asian-Americans, and 2% among African-Americans.⁸

USE OF TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, AND OTHER ILLICIT DRUGS AMONG YOUTH

- Illegal drug use is rare among those who have never smoked. Cigarette smoking is likely to precede use of alcohol or illegal drugs.⁹
- Virtually no use of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs (except cocaine) begins after age 25.¹⁰
- More than 3.5 million 12- through 17-year-olds have tried marijuana, and one-third of these are regular users; over half a million adolescents have tried cocaine, and half of these are regular users.¹¹

