

KICK IT.



FACTS

Tobacco kills.

You've probably heard that before, so let's put it in perspective: for every person who dies in a road crash, more than 10 die due to tobacco. ¹

Most people who smoke began as teenagers. It makes sense – it's hard to take the risks of smoking seriously when the consequences seem so far away. Plus, plenty of young smokers believe they can quit at any time they want, before those unwanted health consequences kick in. But guess what? More than 90 percent of Australians who smoke began smoking as teenagers.² Most of them probably thought they could quit at anytime too.

Why do young people smoke?

Good question. There's no simple answer.

As well as individual reasons for smoking – like plain old curiosity and rebellion – there are also wider social and environmental influences:

Individual Influences

Personal beliefs and values about smoking
Self esteem
Curiosity
Rebellion

Social Factors

Influence of peer and friendship groups
Parental influences
Demographic factors such as socioeconomic status or employment status

Wider Environmental Influences

Availability, accessibility and price
Exposure to marketing and the media

We all have different attitudes toward smoking, or other personality traits like curiosity or rebelliousness that might influence whether we start smoking as a young person.

Social Factors

Social and family situations can have a big impact on whether someone decides to take up smoking. Two of the most common influences are parents and family, and peer pressure and social environment.

Parents and Family

Basically, it boils down to this – if you're hanging around with people that smoke, you're more likely to start smoking too. Young people who have family members or close friends who smoke are significantly more likely to smoke than those who don't.³

Peer Pressure and the Social Environment

It's no secret that smokers can feel like they belong to a club. For many young people, that sense of 'belonging' can seem a lot more important than any long-term health effects.

There are plenty of societal reasons that make young people more likely to take up smoking, particularly when life gets difficult and stressful.⁴ These can include:

- lack of parental support and direction
- family conflict
- not doing very well at school
- financial hardships
- unemployment or unstable employment.

Wider Environmental Influences

There are also broader reasons for smoking that relate to the media and legislation which influence whether young people smoke.

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Availability and Accessibility

If you can get your hands on cigarettes easily you're more likely to smoke. So if cigarettes are available at home, for example if parents, siblings or household members smoke and leave cigarettes around the house, or if it is easy to buy cigarettes, there is more of a chance that a young person will smoke.

Marketing

One thing is certain – a lot of money is made from the sale of tobacco products.

And new customers are needed to ensure future sales, which means finding ways to persuade young people to take up smoking.⁵

While cigarette advertising is banned in Australia, there are plenty of creative ways that tobacco products are promoted to young people around the world. However in South Australia some of these are now banned.

Some of these creative methods include:

- cigarette packaging
- smoking and product placement in movies,
- sponsoring sport and music events (festivals, music artists, sports car racing) (banned in South Australia),
- promotions in magazines and in the fashion industry (banned in South Australia),
- flavoured cigarettes (banned in South Australia).

For more information on legislation and restrictions go to www.tobaccolaws.sa.gov.au

Media

The media can play a major role in influencing young people to smoke through sources such as:

- magazines
- television
- movies.

Research has shown that young people who watch movies in which actors smoke are about three times more likely to smoke than those not seeing smoking in films.⁶

¹ Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy. National Tobacco Strategy 2004-2009: The Strategy, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005:1.

² Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy. National Tobacco Strategy 2004-2009: The Strategy, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005:1.

³ Hoey, M & Miller, C. Smoking among South Australian Secondary Students – Results from the 2005 ASSAD Survey. Tobacco Control Research and Evaluation Program, Adelaide, August 2006.

⁴ Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy. National Tobacco Strategy 2004-2009: The Strategy, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005:14.

⁵ Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Washington 2001. How Do You Sell Death..?

⁶ Dalton MA et al, 2003 Effect of viewing smoking in movies on adolescent smoking initiation: a cohort study. Lancet 362: 281-5.