



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Teens and Tobacco

Tobacco Use Among Middle and High School Students – United States, 2011-2016

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States, and most tobacco product use begins during adolescence. Dr. Andrea Gentzke is a researcher with CDC's Office on Smoking and Health. She's joining us today to discuss ways to keep young people from using tobacco products. Welcome to the show, Andrea.

[Dr. Gentzke] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Dooling] Andrea, how common is tobacco use among young people?

[Dr. Gentzke] We've actually observed a decrease in current use of any tobacco product among youth from 2015 to 2016. However, about 3.9 million youth in the United States, or about one in five high school students and about one in 14 middle school students, still report using some form of tobacco.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the most popular tobacco products?

[Dr. Gentzke] E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. middle and high school students. Conventional cigarettes are the second most common tobacco product, followed by cigars. However, it's important to note that about half of youth tobacco product users are currently using two or more tobacco products.

[Dr. Dooling] Is e-cigarette use harmful to youth?

[Dr. Gentzke] Yes. Youth use of *any* tobacco product is unsafe, regardless of whether it's smoked, it's smokeless, or it's electronic. The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that e-cigarette aerosol is *not* harmless, as these products typically contain nicotine. Nicotine exposure during adolescence can cause addiction and can also harm the adolescent brain.

[Dr. Dooling] What health problems are associated with tobacco use?

[Dr. Gentzke] So, as you already mentioned, tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. Use of tobacco increases the risk for many different types of cancer, the most common being lung cancer. It also increases the risk of other severe health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and diabetes, just to name a few.

[Dr. Dooling] How can we discourage young people from using tobacco products?

[Dr. Gentzke] Well, the good thing is, we know what works to help prevent and reduce tobacco use among youth. Coupled with regulations of tobacco products, we can implement proven strategies, such as increasing the price of tobacco products, protecting the public from secondhand smoke and secondhand e-cigarette aerosol exposures, implementing national public education media campaigns, and also restricting youth access to tobacco products through minimum age of sale restrictions.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about tobacco use among young people?

[Dr. Gentzke] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/tobacco.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Andrea. I've been talking today with Dr. Andrea Gentzke about ways to keep young people from using tobacco products.

Parents, teachers, and mentors: Inform young people about the dangers of tobacco use. Helping youth avoid tobacco products can result in longer, healthier lives.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.