



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Smoking is So Yesterday

Cigarette Use Among High School Students — United States, 1991–2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] 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. Robert Gaynes.

Smoking in the boys' room apparently is not nearly as popular as it once was. A recent CDC study indicates that cigarette use has declined significantly among high school students. In 1997, nearly four in ten teenagers was smoking cigarettes. By 2007, the rate had been cut in half. Dr. Terry Pechacek is Associate Director of Science with CDC's Office on Smoking and Health. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of preventing cigarette use among teenagers. Welcome to the show, Terry.

[Dr. Pechacek] Good morning.

[Dr. Gaynes] Terry, how does CDC track teenage smoking trends?

[Dr. Pechacek] We survey high school students in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and we draw a national sample of high schools and then ask the students in grades nine through twelve to tell us about their risky behaviors, including drugs, alcohol, and tobacco use. We conduct this survey every two years, so the current data is for 2007.

[Dr. Gaynes] What have been the most important trends in the last ten years?

[Dr. Pechacek] From 1991 through 1997, we saw a dramatic increase in high school smoking rates, but then the trend reversed and we saw a dramatic decline from '97 through 2003. Unfortunately, that pattern hasn't continued. In the last two data survey points, we've seen a flattening or a stall.

[Dr. Gaynes] What brought about that significant decline that began in the late '90s?

[Dr. Pechacek] We had a broad public health response to the dramatic increase, which really upset a lot of people. We saw rates of smoking increasing so rapidly that finally, the states, the federal government, and all of our public health partners started a dramatic response, which included the funding of large public health campaigns in our states and a national campaign by the American Legacy Foundation that had prevention programs on the media all the time.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why do you think the decline has leveled off in recent years?

[Dr. Pechacek] Well, the tobacco industry never stopped promoting its product. Additionally, the campaigns have become underfunded. The American Legacy Foundation media campaign has

only about half the level of funding, and a number of our major states, like Massachusetts and Florida and Mississippi and Minnesota, that had the most dramatic prevention campaigns have completely gone off the air.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what do you recommend to parents, teachers, and the community at large to get kids or keep kids from smoking cigarettes?

[Dr. Pechacek] We need to work together in a comprehensive fashion. At the community level, we need to make smoking less attractive and less available. We need to do things like increasing the price of cigarettes and reducing the commercial availability. At the schools, we need to have a tobacco-free policy that's for faculty, staff, students, and events, as well as a good educational effort that helps the students understand all of the risks involved. For parents, they need to make sure that they have a clear message that smoking is dangerous, and they also need to monitor the images their kids are seeing in DVDs, on the cable, and particularly what movies are seen. Images in entertainment have a dramatic effect of undercutting the parental nonsmoking advice. All these things need to work together in a coordinated, comprehensive fashion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about ways to prevent teen smoking?

[Dr. Pechacek] At our Office on Smoking and Health website: www.cdc.gov/tobacco.

[Dr. Gaynes] Terry, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Pechacek] It's been my pleasure to work with you and look forward to anything we can do to help the public in this problem.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, that's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.