

Reading & writing for information

Teenage smoking has been a problem for a long time. During the 1970's smoking rates declined in teens but in the last five years the rates have sharply increased. The exact cause and the solution to this problem are both highly disputed, but the increase needs to be stopped.

There are many factors that have contributed to the rise in teenage smoking. The FDA blames the rise namely on the tobacco industry and says that it's marketing its products to youths. From 1970 to 1994 the industry's spending on domestic advertisements has gone up 250 percent adjusted for inflation. Obviously the tobacco industry is trying to increase its market but it isn't known just whom it is trying to expand to. It could be they're trying to market their products to a younger audience. Many tobacco companies now only have people that look older in their advertisements. Many require that the model be and look 25 or older. Just because they have these requirements doesn't mean that the companies don't want to expand to the younger market. The requirements are ways to deny the youth marketing. Even though the models may look older, younger children may still find their image appealing. For instance, many children were strongly attracted to Joe Camel, Marlboro man, and the Marlboro Adventure Team. During the time of these particular advertisements, youth smoking rose the most rapidly. Another marketing ploy that got the attention of many teens was the introduction of giveaway items. The idea was that if cigarettes were bought, coupons would be gained and could be sent in for products such as t-shirts. The products that could be received were just as appealing to young people as they were adults. "If I buy anything but Camel, it feels like I wasted money because I collect Camel cash," said David Bernt. This statement shows that the Camel cash idea gives incentive for younger people to buy cigarettes and to make them Camel.

Obviously, the rise in teen cigarette consumption can't only be blamed on the tobacco industry. In countries where most forms of advertising are banned, teenage smoking still increases. This fact shows that there is more at work than just the tobacco industry. One influence that affects teenage smoking would be the Hollywood portrayal of smoking. Smokers in the movies are often rugged, rouge heroes and smoking increases that image. Smoking cigars is also a sign of success in many movies. After a victory in the movies, people will often rejoice in taking a few drags on a cigar. These positive looks on smoking can cause a youth to model their Hollywood hero and pick up smoking. Peer pressure is always one of the things that can cause a teen to start smoking. Many kids think that smoking will make them more popular or cool and they start to smoke because of their desire to be cool. More recently, this hasn't been the case because smoking is becoming more usual. This causes percentages of people who have smoked a cigarette to go down while the frequency of cigarette smoking goes up in addicted smokers. Case in point, there are fewer teens that have smoked, but among those who do smoke, they are more addicted and are smoking more cigarettes. In 1992, about 62 percent of 12th graders had smoked a cigarette, but only 28 percent had smoked in the past 30 days. In 1996, the percent that had smoked was about the same but now 34 percent had smoked in the last 30 days. During this same time period, the amount of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who smoked half a pack a day had grown. These facts show that the factors listed above are causing teens to smoke more.

Knowing the causes of the rise in smoking is the most important part in reducing it. One example of this would be the idea that the FDA should restrict the marketing of tobacco products. This idea comes from the fact that tobacco companies market to youths. Because of this, some people think that tobacco companies' marketing should be regulated. Another idea for reducing teen smoking is that cartoon figures like Joe Camel can no longer be used. Cartoons

appeal to children and they could make the idea of smoking seem as if it is a good thing.

Another plan that could possibly lessen the amount of teenage smoking would be to make free merchandise with the purchase of cigarettes illegal. This practice encourages everyone, not just adults, to smoke more. Basically, the more you smoke the more free things you can get. If teens aren't encouraged to smoke as much, then there might be a less chance of them becoming heavy smokers. This idea is connected directly to the camel cash marketing campaign. One last plan that would lessen teenage smoking would be to make buying and smoking cigarettes illegal for people under a certain age. This idea is taken from the smoking to be cool idea. If smoking outside with a friend is illegal, then there isn't quite as much pressure to do it and it might not seem quite so cool to many people.

Teenage smoking will obviously never be completely eradicated, but many things can and are being done to stop it because of implications of the causing factors. The negative health aspects of smoking are becoming better known and maybe over the years smoking will decline on its own. Stricter regulations by the government and higher taxes will also help the decline along.