

School Kid Smoking Alarms Educators, Doctors

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Special)—An alarming smoke signal is rising from America's school-age youngsters.

According to the National Education Association, more teenagers are smoking cigarettes than ever before and they're starting at an earlier age than they did a generation ago. It is estimated that from 10 to 15 percent of all 13-year-olds smoke; and for each successive age level, there is a percentage increase up to age 18 where 50 percent smoke regularly.

In fact, a new NEA pamphlet on smoking called "Cigarettes and the Schools", says it is evident that the smoking habit begins all too often during the elementary years.

At the start of a new school term what can schools and parents do to help youngsters kick the habit—or better still, never get hooked?

Some schools crack down hard on student smoking. A recent report by the American Association of School Administrators and the Research Division of the National Education Association shows that of 260 school systems with student populations ranging from 12,000-100,000 and up, 199 completely prohibit smoking on the school grounds.

AT THE OTHER END of the spectrum, some schools provide a student smoking facility, but at the same time require all its students to take courses on the harmful effects of smoking.

The report underlines the bad effects of smoking on the would-be school athlete, quoting the American Medical Association which states that "acute impairment of pulmonary lung function in young smokers as compared to non-smokers has been demonstrated."

For another, nonsmoking youngsters seem to achieve better grades in school, and to take part in more activities such as music, athletics, drama, special clubs, student government.

Concerned parents can work with the schools in developing sound policies on the smoking question, says the NEA pamphlet which is based on a study of the American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Some of the problems to be explored include:

Should student smoking facilities at school be abolished?

What kind of instructional program should the school conduct concerning smoking?

At what age level should smoking education begin?

What is the school's responsibility for students who smoke while traveling to and from school?

Should school smoking policies be extended to all school activities and to all citizens attending them?

PARENTS CAN GET IN their best persuading right around home, according to a new booklet of the Children's Bureau called "Your Teenage Children and Smoking." The ideas in this come from young people themselves. Some 125 teenagers who were involved in a conference on the subject say to parents everywhere:

If you want your child never to smoke or to give up cigarettes once he has started, don't smoke yourself.

If you smoke and cannot break the habit, point out your weakness. Say it is so hard to give up cigarettes that this is one good reason for never getting started.

If you make a bargain with your child about his not smoking or your not smoking, never break your end of it.

If your child raises the argument, "If I don't smoke I'm chicken with the gang," point

out that you have tried to bring him up to follow his own beliefs, to be independent, not to go with the herd even though that course requires firm willpower.

If your youngster seems to ignore or be unmoved by your advice, don't be surprised. A teenager may respect his parents but prefer to take advice from someone else—his teacher, his doctor, minister or public health nurse.



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