



Drug Monitor

ONLINE EDITION

Getting Young Smokers to Quit

Smokers are not all alike, so they don't all quit smoking in similar ways, and age is a determining factor. About 22% of young adults are smokers. The years between the ages of 18 and 24 are critical: That's when the habit becomes entrenched, setting them up for a lifetime of smoking unless they quit—which they're willing to try, according to studies.

The Department of Health and Human Services has clinical practice guidelines for smoking cessation among adults, but they don't specifically address young adults, say re-

searchers from University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; University of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois; and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Young adults, they point out, are more likely than older adults to be lighter smokers and less likely to smoke daily. That means that nicotine dependence may be less of a factor for them.

The researchers gathered data from 14 studies to find out which smoking cessation programs might work best for younger smokers. Looking at pharmacotherapy (with nicotine replacement or bupropion), cognitive-behavioral therapy, counseling, and social support, researchers found it isn't the tools, it's the motivation to

use the tools. That is, it wasn't necessarily the type of intervention that made the difference, but the fact that the smoker used the intervention. In fact, all interventions were associated with higher odds of quitting in young adults—as they were for older people.

The key seems to be motivating younger smokers to make use of evidence-based treatments. The difference, the researchers suggest, may lie in “driving or attracting young adults to an intervention versus what is delivered once the young adult is ready to engage in treatment.” ●

Source: Suls JM, Luger TM, Curry SJ, Mermelstein RJ, Sporer AK, An LC. *Am J Prev Med.* 2012;42(6):655-662. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2012.02.013.