

Tobacco initiation among teens influenced by use among family & friends, says study

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(Illustration by: CR Sasikumar)

WOMEN SMOKERS are more likely to be influenced by mothers who smoke whereas, male smokers are more likely to be influenced by close friends, says a research study conducted by the Healis-Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health, Navi Mumbai, in collaboration with the University of Waterloo and Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

The research also showed that users of smokeless tobacco products are likely to have friends or spouse who use the same form of smokeless tobacco.

This study was published in the September issue of the WHO South-East Asia Journal of Public Health.

For the study, as many as 9,699 households from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal were questioned. The sample size included individuals aged 15 years and was conducted between.

These findings were found after a study was conducted in 9,699 households among individuals aged 15 years and over conducted between August 2010 and September 2011.

The findings are in accordance with social learning theory in psychology and social impact theory in sociology.

According to these theories, individuals imitate behaviors they observe from individuals with whom they identify closely, such as, parents, siblings, friends/peers, teachers and the media and the influence varies depending on the importance of the person to the individual. Studies from other countries report somewhat similar findings.

According to Dr PC Gupta, findings suggest that tobacco control interventions might be more effective if they specifically address social influences on tobacco, as significance of having close associates who smoke would extend to the quitting intention. According to Global Adult Tobacco Survey, there are 275 million tobacco users in India.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, oncologist and surgeon from the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, said, the study brings out the role of peer pressure in initiation of tobacco habit.

This shows that tobacco use among family members does promote the habit, especially among women. It is well known that tobacco use among family members legitimises the habit in the mind of vulnerable kids who hold them as their role models. It is also interesting to note that, most boys start the habit due to peer pressure from friends, states the study.