



Nearly 90% of tobacco users start before age 18, the legal age to buy cigarettes. To replace adult smokers who have quit, or died, tobacco companies market their products aggressively to youth and young adults.

Teen Tobacco Use In Rhode Island:

The *2011 RI Youth Risk Behavior Survey* showed:

- 11.4% of youth in grades 9-12 smoke cigarettes, including 13.3% of boys and 9.6% of girls.
- 9.8% of high school age boys and 1.5% of girls use smokeless tobacco (spit tobacco).

“New” Tobacco Products Appealing to Youth:

- Fruit-flavored cigarettes
- Little cigars
- Sweet-tasting chewing tobacco
- “Snus” (held in the mouth in a teabag-like pouch)
- Dissolvable tobacco that looks like breathe mints

How Teens Obtain Tobacco:

According to the *2012 Monitoring the Future Survey*.

- 51% of 8th graders and 73% of 10th graders said cigarettes were “easy for them to get.”
- More than half of youth smokers usually *buy their cigarettes*, from stores, gas stations, vending machines or online, or get others to buy cigarettes for them.
- About a third of youth smokers smoke *cigarettes given to them* by others, and a very small percentage shoplift or steal their cigarettes.

Health Concerns Associated with Underage Tobacco Use:

About a third of all underage tobacco users will die prematurely as adults from cancers, emphysema and heart disease. Other health consequences occur more quickly, including:

- Nicotine addiction
- Reduced lung function, shortness of breath and increased phlegm production
- Decreased physical fitness and endurance
- Cardiovascular damage
- Periodontal damage, tooth loss and bad breath

Preventing Teen Tobacco Use:

Some recommended community approaches to keep teens tobacco-free:

- Make it harder for teens to buy tobacco (raise tobacco cost and enforce youth access laws).
- Further restrict tobacco marketing to youth.
- Support policies to limit depictions of smoking in movies and TV programs aimed at youth audiences.
- Educate teens to make healthy choices.
- Show that tobacco use is the exception, not the norm among teens by using social media.

For more information:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/tobacco
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids at www.tobaccofreekids.org
- Rhode Island Tobacco Control Network at www.ritcn.org
- Rhode Island Smoker’s Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) or www.quitnowri.com

Content Sources:

Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2012
CDC Fact Sheet: Youth and Tobacco Use