

the Putnam Valley Health Advisory Council presents . . .

the HAC Helpline #18

for the Students and Families of the Putnam Valley Central School District

New Data Points to a Tendency to Tobacco Addiction in Teens

N*YTimes* health columnist Jane Brody published an article in late 2007 entitled *In Adolescents, Addiction to Tobacco Comes Easy*. Brody pointed to recent published medical research published in *The Journal of Family Practice* indicating that kids risk tobacco addiction even after their very first cigarette. She quotes Dr. Joseph R. DiFranza, a family health and community medicine specialist at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, who studies tobacco dependence.

Dr. DiFranza, Brody explains, “described a typical teenage smoker - a 14-year-old girl who smokes only occasionally, about three cigarettes a week. She admitted to having failed at several efforts to quit. Each time she tried, cravings and feelings of irritability drove her back to smoking. ‘We have long assumed that kids got addicted because they were smoking 5 or 10 cigarettes a day,’” Dr. DiFranza said in an interview. ‘Now we know that they risk addiction after trying a cigarette just once.’ He based this conclusion on the findings of a 10-item checklist he and colleagues devised to help people of all ages determine whether they were hooked on nicotine.”

In his medical journal article, Dr. DiFranza wrote: “Studies on a cohort of seventh graders found that every symptom on this validated checklist had been experienced by at least one young person within weeks of starting to smoke, sometimes after the first cigarette. These results have been replicated many times. Three New Zealand national surveys involving 25,722 adolescent smokers who used this checklist revealed a loss of autonomy in 25 percent to 30 percent of young people who had smoked their one and only cigarette during the preceding month.”

“Dr. DiFranza explained that a phenomenon called dependence-related tolerance—how long after smoking a cigarette you can go before you need to smoke another one—was long thought to be the same for adolescents and adults. But recent studies have

shown that the brains of adolescents can become tolerant to nicotine after smoking fewer cigarettes than one a day, and it is tolerance that then drives them to smoke more often. ‘The typical adult smoker begins to crave the next cigarette in 45 minutes to an hour after smoking,’ he said. ‘But kids can be addicted and not need to smoke again for days, even weeks.’”

Brody also points out that “the once steady decline in teenage smoking has leveled off, antismoking ads on television have all but disappeared and smoking in movies has risen to a near all-time high. ‘Well over a dozen studies have shown that kids who watch movies with smoking are more likely to smoke,’ Dr. DiFranza said. ‘Smoking in movies is more common now than it was in the 1950s and ‘60s, whereas smoking among adults is half as common now as it was then. Movie producers are not reflecting real life.’ He urged parents, including those who smoke themselves, to emphasize to their children that it’s a huge mistake to start smoking.”

How to Know if You're Hooked

The more yeses, the more dependent you are.

1. Have you ever tried to quit smoking, but couldn't?
2. Do you smoke now because it is really hard to quit?
3. Have you ever felt as if you were addicted to tobacco?
4. Do you ever have strong cravings to smoke?
5. Have you ever felt as if you really needed a cigarette?
6. Is it hard to keep from smoking in places where you are not supposed to, like school?
When you tried to stop smoking or when you haven't used tobacco for a while:
7. Did you find it hard to concentrate because you couldn't smoke?
8. Did you feel more irritable because you couldn't smoke?
9. Did you feel a strong need or urge to smoke?
10. Did you feel nervous, restless or anxious because you couldn't smoke?

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/health/12brod.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

There are programs in place here in Putnam County that can help. Contact your school nurse today for more information.

About the PV Health Advisory Council For close to 20 years, The Putnam Valley Health Advisory Council has been quietly taking responsibility for improving the health, safety, and well being of the children of the Putnam Valley Central School District, as well as the community at large. This group of teachers, parents, physicians, nurses, law enforcement, administrators and students meets monthly throughout the school year and the summer and sponsors community events and programs aimed at educating and informing the children and parents of Putnam Valley.