

Youth Quitline helps Young Smokers kick the habit

Youth Quitline is a free smoking cessation service for young smokers jointly organized by the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health. It aims to increase the successful quit rate and reduce the harm caused by tobacco.

A survey conducted by HKU Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine showed that the majority of hotline users had friends or family members who are smokers. More than half of those had tried to quit but failed. Previous studies showed that the continuous quit rate (at least 80% of time is free from smoking for the past 12 months) is 8% in teenagers, which is much lower than that of adults (19%).

HKU also interviewed 32 teenagers and found that peer influence and boredom were the main reasons of smoking. The study also revealed that most teenagers underestimated the harm caused by tobacco, and they underestimated the difficulties of quitting smoking. Although most teenagers perceived quitting as meeting some short-term goals, such as dating or having job interviews, they smoked again when the goal is achieved. Meanwhile, most of them had little knowledge on the smoking cessation services in Hong Kong.

The Youth Quitline is set up to help teenagers quit smoking. In order to provide effective communication to youth smokers, the quitline is managed by trained peer counselors who are HKU nursing, medical, and social work students, supervised by the senior nurse counselors. . We use motivational strategies to strengthen the confidence of smokers and assist them to work with withdraw symptoms. Advice on healthy diet and weight control will also be given during the counseling sessions. Enquiry and registration hotline is 2819-9557 or visit website at <http://www.hku.hk/yquit> .