

**Scientific
Advisory Board**

David A. Birch, PhD, CHES
Professor & Chair
Southern Illinois
University Carbondale
Department of Health
Education & Recreation
Carbondale, Illinois

Stephen Brown, PhD
Assistant Professor
Southern Illinois
University Carbondale
Department of Health
Education & Recreation
Carbondale, Illinois

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CDC Global Health Odyssey
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
Atlanta, Georgia

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Wilmington, Delaware

D'Arcy Lyness, PhD
Behavioral Health Editor
KidsHealth
Wilmington, Delaware

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Director of Programs
Ruth Lilly Health Education
Center
Indianapolis, Indiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kira Ebert
(302) 651-4115 – phone

**PARENTS WHO SMOKE ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO
HAVE CHILDREN WHO SMOKE, RECENT POLL SAYS.**

Poll underscores the importance of parents as role models for their children.

Milwaukee, WI, and Wilmington, DE, April 20, 2005 – A recent KidsHealth KidsPoll found that kids from homes with smokers were twice as likely to have tried or regularly smoke or chew tobacco (22%) than kids from non-smoking homes (10%). The poll surveyed 1,433 children ages 9-13 about their opinions of smoking and chewing tobacco. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of children polled reported that someone in their home smoked.

Other risk factors for smoking were more common among kids from homes with smokers:

- 46% (vs. 31% of kids from a non-smoking home) said they had friends who smoked;
- 16% (vs. 10%) said they were likely to try smoking if their best friend tried smoking;
- 30% (vs. 19%) said no one in their family had ever talked with them about the dangers of smoking and other tobacco products.

When asked, *What is the best way to keep kids from smoking?* kids from both smoking and non-smoking homes agreed that “Give them other fun things to do” was the best way to keep kids from smoking; however, 27% of kids from homes with smokers ranked “Let them learn from their own experiences” second, while 23% of kids from non-smoking homes chose “Have a doctor or nurse talk to them.”

“Learning from their own experiences sounds harmless,” says Barbara P. Homeier, MD, pediatrician and medical editor for KidsHealth, *“but kids don’t realize that addiction to nicotine can begin within days of first experimenting.”* According to the U.S. Surgeon General, more than 90% of all adult smokers began smoking while in their teens or earlier. In fact, the nicotine in tobacco can be as addictive as cocaine or heroin.

Dr. Homeier recommends that *“parents should take an active role in communicating with their child about the health risks associated with smoking, as well as their own struggle with the addiction if they smoke.”*

The KidsHealth KidsPoll on Tobacco surveyed 1,433 children ages 9 to 13 across the U.S. at twelve member sites of the National Association of Health Education Centers. The survey was conducted by researchers from the Department of Health Education and Recreation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Survey questions were drafted with the expertise of the KidsPoll Scientific Advisory Board and Tobacco Experts Lee Gilman Scott, Deputy Director of the American Lung Association of Maine and Steve Sussman, PhD, Professor of Preventive Medicine and Psychology at the University of Southern California.

For more information on findings or to arrange an interview concerning the KidsHealth KidsPoll, contact Kira Ebert at (302) 651-4115 or KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org. For complete survey findings and methodology, visit nahec.org/KidsPoll.

For information for parents, visit: **KidsPoll: Kids Speak Up About Tobacco**
http://www.kidshealth.org/breaking_news/kidspoll_tobacco.html

For information for kids, visit: **What Kids Say About Tobacco**
http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/drugs_alcohol/poll_tobacco.html

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About the KidsHealth® KidsPoll

A project of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC), the Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media (creators of KidsHealth.org), and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education and Recreation (project researchers), the KidsHealth KidsPoll gives children a national platform to share their views on health-related issues that affect them. For more information about the KidsHealth KidsPoll, please visit nahec.org/KidsPoll/.

About the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC)

NAHEC is the national association and network of nonprofit health education centers (HECs) and of other organizations that support children’s health education and provide products and services to HECs. NAHEC member centers reached over 3 million children, teachers, and parents in 2004. HECs use life-size exhibits, advanced audio-visual technology, and specialized, interactive instructional techniques not generally found in conventional classrooms. The curriculum is designed to support school-mandated areas of study. With programs like "Whodunit? - A Forensic Science Camp", Hummers outfitted with removable organs, and playgrounds modeled after anatomy parts, you’ll see why former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop proclaimed that health education centers “put pizzazz in prevention.” For more information about NAHEC, please visit nahec.org.

About KidsHealth®

KidsHealth creates engaging online, print, and video media about a wide range of health and family issues. KidsHealth has a physician-directed, professional editorial staff – and is the largest resource of online children’s health, behavioral, and developmental information written for three distinct audiences: parents, kids, and teens. In 2004, over 60 million families turned to KidsHealth.org for expert answers – making it the Web’s most accessed site on children’s health. Recent accolades include the **2004 Webby Award for Best Health Website, 2004 Parents’ Choice Gold Award, 2004 Teachers’ Choice Award for the Family**, and selection as one of the **50 Coolest Websites** by **TIME Magazine**. KidsHealth comes from Nemours, one of the largest nonprofit organizations devoted to children’s health. For more information about KidsHealth, please visit KidsHealth.org.

About Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education & Recreation

Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s Department of Health Education and Recreation conduct the KidsHealth KidsPoll. The research team for this project is led by Steve Brown and David A. Birch, faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Recreation. The department offers a bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree in health education and a bachelor’s and master’s degree in recreation. The health education program is recognized nationally as a leader in school health education and graduate-level teaching and research. Graduates of the program are in health education leadership positions across the country. The department includes 11 health education faculty members and six recreation faculty members. For more information about SIUC, please visit www.siu.edu.