

# UP PINN

# SMOKE



Shaky hands.  
Throbbing headaches.  
A constant buzz in the back of the head.  
"Whenever you don't have one, you can feel it through your entire body," Levi Older, sr., said.  
Each morning he wakes up and has one.  
"By the time lunch comes around, I go outside to have another one, then on the way to work, and on my break," Older said.  
Everyday, several times a day, Older smokes a cigarette.

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"By the time lunch comes around, I go outside to have another one, then on the way to work, and on my break," Older said. "Basically one every few hours."

Everyday, several times a day, Older smokes a cigarette.

"I started hanging out with this guy for two or three weeks solid, and he got me started smoking a lot with him," Older said. "Before I knew it I found myself always wanting a cigarette."

At the time, Older was 17 and accessed the tobacco products through friends. Now at age 18, the legal age of tobacco use in Kansas, Older purchases the cigarettes himself.

In recent reports issued by the Center for Disease Control, 80 percent of adult smokers reported that they began smoking before the age of 18.

"I probably smoke six or seven cigarettes a day," Older said.

At \$5 or \$6 per pack (20 cigarettes are in a pack) Older spends approximately \$10 each week on cigarettes.

He spends about \$520 each year to buy the tobacco products.

But Older is not proud of the routine he has developed.

"It's disgusting," Older said. "I'm embarrassed by my habit."

He hid the cigarettes from his parents for a long time, but they eventually discovered his routine.

Now he refrains from smoking around his house so his younger siblings will not find out about the cigarettes.

"I don't want them to be exposed to that kind of thing," Older said.

"The only reason I smoke them

at all is because they do kind of calm you down, especially if you're stressed out," Older said.

Nicotine is not only a stimulant but also a relaxant. It increases levels of dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is hormone that releases sensations of pleasure to the brain.

"My lungs are all screwed up too," Older said. "I get lots of phlegm and stuff."

According to the Center for Disease Control, smoking causes respiratory diseases by damaging the airways and alveoli of the lungs. Nicotine is just one of more than 4000 chemicals, some of which are poisonous, found in tobacco. Health risk behaviors, such as high risk sexual behavior and use of alcohol and other drugs, are associated with tobacco use during adolescence.

"A lot of times my friends try to bum one off me," Older said. "I tell them it's not worth it, because it's really not worth it at all."

Every day in the United States, about 3800 teens under the age of 18 smoke their first cigarette. That means approximately one in five teens smoke cigarettes. About 1000 of teens in that same age group become daily cigarette smokers.

In a survey given by the Center for Disease Control in 2009, 46.3 percent of teens reported trying a cigarette.

For Older, at first the idea of smoking frequently was cool to him.

"I told people, 'Yeah I smoke

"As soon as I realized it was a problem, it wasn't cool anymore. It's not cool to be addicted to something."



Levi Older, sr.

on the regular" and thought it was kind of cool," Older said.

Older's attempts at quitting have been unsuccessful. After using the "cold turkey" method to attempt to quit, the symptoms of withdrawal became unbearable.

"I was just so upset and angry all the time," Older said. "I got about four days in and I couldn't handle the pain I was in."

Because of the addictive qualities of nicotine, when a person tries to quit smoking their body reacts negatively. Often times people experience headaches, mood swings, and nausea.

Quitting cold turkey is the hardest method in that it requires total willpower of the person.

"I started sneaking the cigarettes behind my parents' and friends' backs because I felt guilty that I was doing it again," Older said.

Usually smokers make at least five to seven attempts before they are able to quit smoking for good.

With all the troubles he has endured to quit, Older wishes he would have never started smoking.

"As soon as I realized it was a problem, it was not cool anymore," Older said. "It's not cool to be addicted to something."

Would you ever date someone who used tobacco products?

Of 100 East High students polled:

25%

Said it didn't matter if their significant other used tobacco products

"It's their body and they should do what they want with it. It doesn't impact them as a person."

Andrew Menas, soph.

75%

Said they would not date a person if they used tobacco products

