

Surgeon general shocked by amount of teen smoking

By USA Today

ROCKVILLE, Md. – Many of America's teens smoke cigarettes as well as use smokeless tobacco, and the tobacco industry's marketing fuels their addiction, says the first U.S. surgeon general's report on youth tobacco use since 1994.

"The numbers are really shocking," Surgeon General Regina Benjamin said in an interview, citing data in Thursday's report that nearly one in four high school seniors and one in three young adults under age 26 smoke despite a half-century of federal warnings about tobacco.

"It's a problem we have to solve," Benjamin said, calling it a "pediatric epidemic" in need of greater public action. She said one of every three young smokers will quit and one of the others will die from tobacco-related causes. She said adolescents, because their bodies are developing, are more susceptible than adults to nicotine's addictiveness and tobacco's damage to hearts and lungs.

The voluminous report finds that progress in reducing youth cigarette smoking – quite dramatic from 1997 to 2003 – has slowed in recent years. It says more high school students are using smokeless tobacco and many (at least half of white and Hispanic male tobacco users and nearly half of Hispanic female users) both smoke and chew tobacco.

The report concludes that the tobacco industry's \$10 billion in annual marketing, some of it in promotions to reduce prices, encourages young people to begin and continue their tobacco use.

Read the whole story

