

Number of smoking teenage girls on the rise
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The percentage of teenage girls who smoke, which is higher than of teenage boys, is worrying, especially when there are girls who started smoking even before reaching the age of 10, Deputy Health Minister Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin said today.

She said the 2nd National Health Morbidity and Mortality Survey (NHMS11) conducted in 2003 found that 28.8 per cent of teenage girls smoked, more than double the figure for boys, which was 14.1 per cent.

"This trend is very worrying as it clearly showed that there was a serious increase in the number of female smokers who started at a very young age," she told a press conference after opening the Institute of Respiratory Medicine's World No Tobacco Day 2010 programme in Kuala Lumpur today.

Rosnah said teenage girls picked up the smoking habit mainly due to the influence of advertisements which associated smoking with physical beauty and weight loss.

"There is no beauty or sophistication in smoking. There is only ugliness and threat to health," she said.

Rosnah said smoking also increased the risk of miscarriage and premature delivery of babies.

Hence, she hoped parents, parent-teacher associations and non-governmental organisations would work closely in organising awareness and educational campaigns on the dangers of smoking.

She said it took more than parents' attention to tackle the smoking habit among teenagers as most of their time was spent at other places and with their peers.

She said punishing the teenagers would only cause them to be rebellious.

"There is no good in punishing or even suspending them from school.

"The best way to tackle the problem is by using educational materials and specific advertisements," she added.

- Bernama