Abstract: To examine how adolescents’ inattentive behaviour, together with parental smoking patterns, predicts smoking initiation by age 14. DESIGN, SETTINGS: A prospective, longitudinal study: baseline at ages 11-12, follow-up at age 14. A population-based sample of Finnish twins, born 1983-1987, with parents and classroom teachers as additional informants. Two groups were formed, allocating the co-twins of each family into separate groups: the study sample and a replication sample.

Twin individuals (n = 4552), aged 11-12 at baseline and 14 (average 14.04 years) at follow-up.

At baseline, inattentiveness was assessed with the Multidimensional Peer Nomination Inventory (MPNI, Teacher Form) and parental smoking with individual questionnaires completed by each twins’ parents; at the age 14 follow-up, adolescent smoking was assessed with a self-report questionnaire.

At age 14, 57% reported never having smoked, 34% had experimented with cigarettes and 9% were current smokers. Inattentiveness and parental smoking additively predicted both experimental and current smoking in adolescence. The effects were independent of each other.

The risk related to inattentiveness itself is high, but in combination with the effects of parental smoking, the probability of current smoking can rise as high as 38%, compared with 5% without these two risk factors. For prevention purposes, parental commitment to non-smoking should be emphasized.

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