

Pre-Teen Smoking Targeted by Authorities

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Health Ministry has approved a new procedure for annual physical exams of school children that will see children over 10 tested for smoking, Izvestia reported Monday.

Each student over 10 will have both a blood test and an analysis done of his or her exhaled breath to test for carbon monoxide and carboxyhaemoglobin, chemicals that serve as indicators of tobacco smoking.

The testing, which will cover about 26.7 million children in the mandatory health insurance system, will cost the budget 35 billion rubles.

Experts have warned that this procedure is not very effective, since carbon monoxide only shows up in the blood if the procedure is done directly after the student smoked. In addition, such chemicals may show up in a blood test even if a student simply ingests second-hand smoke.

Teachers, for their part, say that they can usually tell which students smoke, meaning the testing is unnecessary. The real solution, they say, is getting more school psychologists for those who do smoke.

This is only the latest in a range of anti-smoking measures, with the most controversial — the "anti-smoking law" — to come into effect July 1. That law not only stipulates fines for anyone caught smoking in a public place, but also bans cigarette sales in kiosks.

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