

Smoking in the Movies is a More Powerful Motivator for Children and Adolescents to Start Smoking than Traditional Tobacco Ads

- Movies with smoking recruit 180,000 new teen smokers a year, of whom 60,000 will eventually die prematurely from tobacco-related disease.^{1,2,3}
- Exposure to pro-tobacco marketing and media increases the odds of children and adolescents having a positive attitude toward tobacco use by 50%. It more than doubles the odds they will begin to smoke.⁴ According to researchers studying the effect of tobacco marketing in media, seeing smoking in a movie may be more psychologically engaging to a young person than a cigarette ad, and it may have a bigger impact on their attitude toward smoking and their intent to smoke.^{5,4}
- The latest published estimate of the number of kids that films with smoking put in harm's way has found that seeing smoking in the movies explains 44% of adolescents starting to smoke.²
 - o A cohort study of New England youth found that smoking in movies had the greatest impact on adolescents who are normally the least likely to start smoking those with non-smoking parents.⁶
 - o A cross-sectional study of US youth found the more smoking in the movies a teen sees, the higher the risk of trying cigarettes. This is true regardless of race/ethnicity or place of residence.⁷
- The effect of seeing smoking in movies on youth overseas mirrors findings in the US. German teens who had seen the most smoking in movies (mostly U.S. movies) were twice as likely to have tried smoking as those who saw the least amount.⁸

Children and Adolescents Can Easily See Smoking in Movies

- In 2005, smoking was depicted in more than half of youth-rated (G, PG and PG-13) movies and 87% of R-rated movies.⁹
- US films with smoking of all ratings delivered 44 billion tobacco impressions to theater audiences from May 2007 to May 2010. Half were delivered by youth-rated films. The film industry added smoking descriptors to its rating labels for only 15% of these youth-rated films with smoking, and half of those descriptors minimize the film's tobacco content. None of them warn viewers that on-screen tobacco imagery is harmful to young people.¹⁰
- In one year, Hollywood movies delivered an estimated 14 billion smoking images to youth ages 10 to 14.¹¹
- In 2001, young teens (ages 12-14) were more likely to report having seen smoking on television and in movies than were young adults.¹²
- Children and adolescents report high levels of awareness of smoking on screen. In 2004, 78% of middle school students and 87% of high school students reported having seen actors on television or in movies smoking.¹³
- Ninety-five percent of teens in the United States were exposed to at least one televised movie trailer depicting tobacco use between August 2001 and July 2002.¹⁴
- The amount of tobacco use or imagery (whether measured as a count of occurrences or as hours of screen time) contained in youth-rated movies remained relatively stable since 1996. This may be explained by a downward ratings creep, in which a higher percentage of movies each year were rated in the youth category.¹⁵
- Smoking in youth-rated movies (P, PG, PG-13) has a greater reach among adolescents because these movies are seen by three times as many youth as R-rated movies.¹⁵

Public Opinion about Smoking in the Movies ¹⁶

- More than 80% of U.S. adults agree that smoking in movies can influence young people to smoke.
- Seventy percent of adults agree with an R-rating for most movies with smoking.
- In 2006, two-thirds of adults reported wanting movie theaters to show anti-tobacco advertisements before any film with smoking images, an increase of 8.8% from the year before.
- More than 60 percent of adults want tobacco branding out of all movie scenes.

SOURCES

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- ⁵ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (December 4, 2006). Exposure to Tobacco Marketing More Than Doubles the Odds of Children Smoking. Press Release. <http://www.rwjf.org/newsroom/newsreleasesdetail.jsp?id=10446>
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- ¹² Niederdeppe J, Lindsey D. Exposure to pro-tobacco messages among teens and young adults: Results from three national surveys. . Legacy First Look Report 12. November 2003. Washington DC: American Legacy Foundation.
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- ¹⁴ Heaton CG, Watson-Stryker ES. Televised movie trailers: Undermining restrictions on advertising tobacco to youth. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*. 2006;160:885-888.
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- ¹⁶ McMillen R, Tanski S, Winickoff J, Valentine N. Attitudes about smoking in the movies. The Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. 2006.