

Fact Sheet: Smoking in Movies

Tobacco Use Stats

- Tobacco use begins young: 88% of adults who have ever smoked tried their first cigarette by the age of 18;¹ the average age at which smokers try their first cigarette is 14 ½.²
- Nationally, more than 48,500,000 are currently smokers.³
- In New York State:
 - 6.7% of middle school children smoke (Middle school males=7.2%, Middle school females=5.6%)⁴
 - 21.3% of high school students smoke (High school males=21%, high school females=21.6%)⁵
 - 23.3% of people over 18 smoke (Males=25.8%, females=19.2%)⁶
- Tobacco Companies spend more than \$11.22 billion in marketing their products each year.⁷

Health Effects of Tobacco Use

- 440,000 people die from tobacco-related illnesses every year, making it the leading cause of preventable death in the United States;⁸ and
- Scientific studies have concluded that cigarette smoking can cause chronic lung disease, coronary heart disease, and stroke, in addition to cancer of the lungs, larynx, esophagus, mouth, and bladder;⁹ and
- Each year, secondhand smoke kills an estimated 62,000 nonsmokers, including approximately 3,000 deaths due to lung cancer and 35,000 deaths due to heart disease among nonsmokers each year in the United States.¹⁰

The Impact of Smoking In Movies

Smoking in films is inconsistent with real smoking rates...

- Although actual smoking rates are nearly half what they were 50 years ago, the number of incidences per hour of smoking in movies in 2002 exceeded the number of incidences per hour in films from 1950¹¹; and
- Although adult smoking rates have been steady or declining since the 80s, smoking in movies is more than twice as common now as it was during its all-time minimum between 1980 and 1982.¹²
- Research shows that adolescents are aware of the high prevalence of smoking in films; and that this perception of high smoking rates on screen leads to perceptions of high smoking rates in real-life, leading to exaggerated ideas of the numbers of peers and adults that smoke.¹³

...And this is no accident.

- In the 1980s, the 4 Major US tobacco Companies (Philip Morris, RJ Reynolds, Brown & Williamson, and American Tobacco Company) hired aggressive product placement teams to put tobacco products and signs in positive situations in films, and to prevent brands from being used in negative situations.¹⁴
- At least one of the companies, RJ Reynolds, had a program to provide free cigarettes to actors on a monthly basis.¹⁵
- Of the top 25 films each year between 1988 and 1997, more than 85% included tobacco use.¹⁶
- Tobacco brand product placement was found in 35% of those films rated for adults, 32% of films rated for adolescents, and 20% of films rated for children.¹⁷

- Although the tobacco industry adopted a voluntary ban on paid product placement in films in 1991, brand visibility did not decrease, and "actor endorsements" of tobacco brands in films increased from 1% to 11%.¹⁸

Smoking in movies has a huge impact on youth smoking.

- After controlling for other factors, 52.2% of youth smoking initiation can be attributed to exposure to smoking in films.¹⁹
- Youth with very high exposure to smoking in movies are 2.71 times more likely to smoke than those with the lowest exposure to smoking in movies.²⁰
- And the effect of smoking in movies on smoking initiation is greater in youth with non-smoking parents.²¹
- Teens that are smokers are more likely than non-smokers to have favorite stars that smoke on and off screen. And non-smokers that had favorite stars that smoke in films and in public are more susceptible to smoking than other non-smokers.²²

Tobacco Industry Quotes

- "Our primary objective will remain the same, to have smoking featured in a prominent way, especially when it is tied favorably with celebrities." *Letter written to President of RJReynolds Tobacco from its PR firm in 1981*
- "Many times we can get a display, a sign, a t-shirt, a logo, etc inserted into a positive scene, even when the product may not be used in the movie. This gives us a real life environment into which your name is used." *John McGinn, Advertising Director for American Tobacco Company*

¹ *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General.* US Dept of Health and Human Services. 1994.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Toll of Tobacco in the United States of America.* Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

⁴ *New York State Youth Tobacco Survey.* New York State Department of Health. 2002.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *BRFSS.* New York State Department of Health. 2002.

⁷ *Cigarette Report for 2001.* US Federal Trade Commission (FTC). June 12, 2003.

⁸ *Annual Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Economic Costs - United States: 1995-1999.* U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1999.

⁹ US Dept of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Targeting Tobacco Use: The Nations Leading Cause of Death (2002).* Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/overview/oshag/pdf>

¹⁰ "State-Specific Prevalence of Cigarette Smoking Among Adults and Children's and Adolescents' Exposure to ETS - US 1996." *CDC. MMWR.* 46 (44):1038-43.

¹¹ Glantz, SA, et al., "Back to the Future: Smoking in Movies in 2002 Compared with 1950 levels," *American Journal of Public Health* 94(2):261-263, February 2004.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ McCool, J et al., "Adolescents Perceptions of Smoking Imagery in Film," *Social Science and Medicine* 52(10):1577-1587, May 2001.

¹⁴ Mekemson, C, and SA Glantz, "How the Tobacco industry Built its relationship with Hollywood," *Tobacco Control* 11(Supplement 1):i81-i91, 2002.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Sargent, J, et al., "Brand Appearances in Contemporary Cinema Films and Contribution to Global Marketing of Cigarettes," *Lancet* 357(9249):29-32, January 2001.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Dalton, MA, et al., "Effect of Viewing Smoking in Movies on Adolescent Smoking Initiation: A Cohort Study," *Lancet*, June 10, 2003.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Distefan, J, et al., "Do Movie Stars Encourage Adolescents to Start Smoking? Evidence from California," *Preventive Medicine* 28(1):1-11, January 1999.