

the Putnam Valley Health Advisory Council presents . . .

the HAC Helpline #5

for the Students and Families of the Putnam Valley Central School District

Increasing Evidence Points to Link Between Youth Smoking and Exposure to Smoking in Movies



From the National Institutes of Health/<http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/nov2005/nci-07b.htm>

Adolescents who see smoking depicted in movies are more likely to try smoking, according to a study funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health. . . .

James Sargent, M.D., of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H., and colleagues are the first to utilize a nationally representative sample of youth in the United States to examine the influence of adolescents' exposure to movie smoking on their smoking behavior.

Prior research has established that social influences, such as family and peer smoking and tobacco advertising, are important determinants of smoking in adolescents. More recently, research has focused on the impact of smoking in entertainment—including the effect of celebrities who smoke—on youth smoking.

Sargent and his team studied adolescents ages 10 to 14 and found that youth had a higher risk of smoking initiation as their exposure to movie smoking increased, with those youth most exposed to movie smoking being most at risk. Adolescents with the greatest exposure to movie smoking were 2.6 times more likely to try smoking than their peers in the least exposed group, after controlling for other factors.

The increased risk of smoking initiation associated with exposure to smoking in the movies was similar to that of other well-known risk factors, such as having a parent or sibling who smokes. This increased risk was seen across youth of all racial and ethnic groups, in all geographic regions of the country.

"This study highlights the significant association between smoking in the movies and youth smoking," said Cathy Backinger, Ph.D., acting chief of NCI's Tobacco Control Research Branch. "The study reaffirms the need to continue to address the full range of influences on adolescent smoking."

. . . "Our findings indicate that all U.S. adolescents, regardless of race or place of residence, have a higher risk of trying smoking as their exposure to movie smoking increases," said Sargent. Sargent and his coauthors suggest various approaches to curbing adolescent exposure to movie smoking, including persuading the movie industry to voluntarily reduce depictions of smoking and cigarette brands; incorporating smoking into the movie ratings system to make parents aware of the risks a movie with smoking poses to the adolescent viewer; and encouraging parents to more strongly enforce restrictions on youths' viewing of R-rated movies, which contain the highest amounts of smoking.

