



News Articles, Addiction, Adolescent Health/Medicine, Media, Screen Time, Smoking

CDC: 1 in 4 youth-rated movies show smoking

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Children can watch people smoking in about 26% of movies rated G, PG or PG-13, renewing calls by federal health officials and the Academy for such films to carry R ratings.

The recommendation stems from a new report showing a rise in the number of smoking incidents in movies geared toward adolescents.

"An R rating for movies with tobacco use could potentially reduce the number of teen smokers by 18% and prevent their premature deaths from tobacco-related diseases," authors wrote in the study published Thursday in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its partners analyzed 2010-'16 data from Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!, a project of Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails, that tracks smoking incidents in top-grossing movies.

In 2016, roughly 41% of movies depicted tobacco use, down from 45% in 2010. For youth-rated films, smoking appeared in 26%, down from 31%.

However, depictions became more concentrated with the number of tobacco incidents rising 72% for all movies. For youth-rated movies, those incidents had been **declining from 2005-2010**, but that trend stalled. Tobacco incidents remained uncommon in G and PG movies, but rose 43% in PG-13 movies.

"The frequency and increase in tobacco incidents in PG-13 movies is of public health concern because these movies are rated as appropriate for youths," authors wrote.

In 2012, the **U.S. surgeon general reported** children are more likely to start smoking the more they watch characters smoking on screen. Adolescence is an especially crucial time as about 90% of smokers start by age 18.

Authors of the new study say movie studio policies aren't enough to keep smoking out of youth-rated movies. They recommend an R rating for films that depict smoking and say there should be no depictions of actual tobacco brands and no payments to studios for depicting tobacco use.

AAP policy also calls for R ratings for movies with smoking as well as strong warnings about the harms of tobacco use. The Academy plans to send a letter to major movie studios and the Motion Picture Association of America expressing its concerns and recommendations.

"Unless the film industry acts to keep smoking out of youth-rated movies, millions more will be influenced to smoke, resulting in tobacco-induced cancers, heart and lung disease, or stroke," said AAP President Fernando Stein, M.D., FAAP. "The American Academy of Pediatrics urges filmmakers to remove depictions of smoking and tobacco use in U.S. movies that are geared toward children. Filmmakers can and must do better."

Resources

- [AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence](#)
- [AAP policy "Clinical Practice Policy to Protect Children From Tobacco, Nicotine, and Tobacco Smoke"](#)



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- [University of California San Francisco research on smoking in movies](#)