

R-rated films tied to teenage smoking

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A U.S. study says Hollywood remains a powerful influence on teenage smoking habits.

A study by North Carolina researchers, published in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, says white teens who watch lots of R-rated movies are 2.7 times as likely to start smoking as teens that do not. Teens who have television sets in their bedrooms are 2.1 percent more likely to smoke, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Virtually all R-rated films between 1988 to 1997 portrayed favorable images of smoking, the newspaper said.

The students, who were 12 to 14 years old, had never tried a cigarette when they were first interviewed. Two years later, 34 percent of the black teens and 27 percent of the white teens had started smoking, researchers from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Chapel Hill, N.C., said.

While African-American teens watched more R-rated movies and were more likely to have their own televisions, "their rate of smoking wasn't linked to their viewing habits," the newspaper said.

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