

## D'oh! Simpsons may promote smoking: Australian researcher

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Long-running US cartoon show "The Simpsons" may inadvertently promote smoking with its frequent depictions of the habit and references to cigarettes, Australian research has found.

While [smoking](#) may be responsible for Krusty the Clown's heart condition and sisters Patty and Selma's raspy voices, the show may promote [tobacco use](#) simply by showing it in so many episodes, the research concluded.

University of Sydney public health specialist Guy Eslick examined instances of smoking in the first 18 seasons of the show about the dysfunctional family from Springfield, trawling through some 400 episodes in all.

He found that smoking was depicted 795 times over the 18-season period, featuring in a negative context 35 percent of the time, positive two percent and neutral 63 percent.

Most of the time, 63 percent, the characters shown smoking were adults, although [children](#) and teenagers featured in eight percent of references, with the rest made up of nicotine-addicted animals.

Eslick said cartoon characters had been shown to be effective tools in marketing [cigarettes](#) to children, citing the long-running Joe Camel campaign in the United States.

He said research had also shown that the more children were exposed to cigarettes in movies and on television, the more likely they were to take up the habit.

"In conclusion, it is clear that smoking is a frequent event on The Simpsons television show, and that even instances of smoking being reflected in a negative way, particularly among child and [adolescent](#) characters, could have an impact in prompting children to smoke cigarettes," Eslick concluded.

The research was published in the Medical Journal of Australia Monday.

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