

Warning: Immigrating to North America may foster smoking in children

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Moving to Canada could be hazardous for the health of young immigrants. A new study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* has found that over time, immigrant children from multiethnic, disadvantaged, inner-city neighbourhoods are up to 3.5 times more likely to smoke. The findings are important since an estimated 45,000 school-aged children immigrate to Canada with their parents each year.

Several reasons prompt new Canadians to light up, says lead author Jennifer O'Loughlin, a professor at the Université de Montréal's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine. "Smoking may be more visible than in their countries of origin, especially if they settle in low-income, inner-city communities where smoking prevalence is high," says Dr. O'Loughlin, who is also a scientist at the Research Centre of the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CRCHUM). "Many of their new friends may smoke, adult smoking may be more visible, smoking may be more apparent in media and there may be increased or easier access to cigarettes."

Dr. O'Loughlin, who collaborated with McGill University colleagues, studied 1,959 Montreal children aged 9 to 12 years old. Among participants, 23 percent were Canadian born, 42 percent had one parent born outside Canada and 35 percent were [immigrants](#) born in another country.

"With each passing year in Canada, young immigrant children are at an increased risk for smoking," warns Dr. O'Loughlin. "Communities

where immigrant families chose to live may have an impact on whether their children smoke. Scientists need to better understand the acculturation of [immigrant children](#) and develop intervention programs to prevent unhealthy behaviours such as smoking among these kids."

More information: The paper, "Does the "Healthy Immigrant Effect" Extend to Smoking in Immigrant Children?," was [published](#) in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Provided by University of Montreal

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