

US launching anti-smoking campaign aimed at youth

February 4 2014, by Michael Felberbaum



This undated image provided by the Food and Drug Administration shows the federal agency's new ad campaign featuring wrinkled skin and yellow teeth to show the costs associated with cigarette smoking. The federal agency said Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014, it is launching a \$115 million multimedia education campaign called "The Real Cost" that's aimed at stopping teenagers from smoking and encouraging them to quit. Advertisements will run in more than 200 markets throughout the U.S. for at least one year beginning Feb. 11. (AP Photo/Food and Drug Administration)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is using ads that depict yellow teeth and wrinkled skin to show at-risk American youth the costs associated with cigarette smoking.

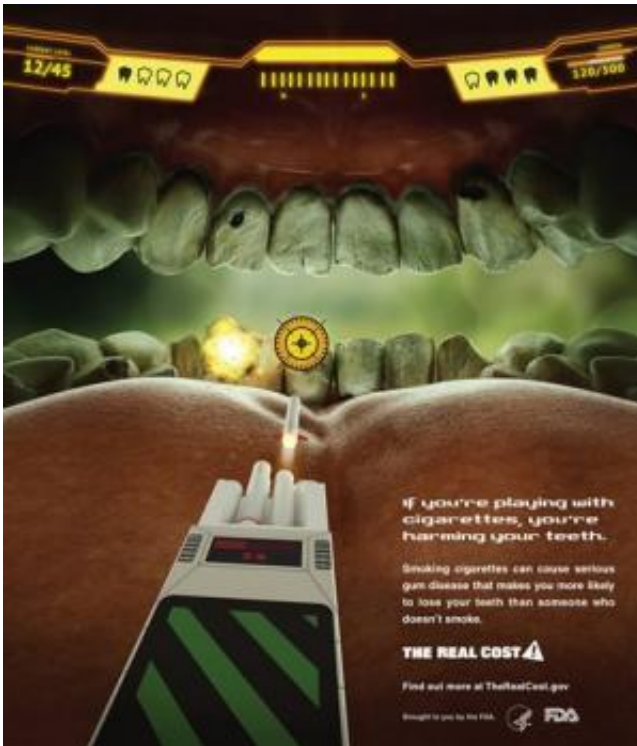
The federal agency said Tuesday it is launching a \$115 million multimedia education campaign called "The Real Cost" that's aimed at stopping teenagers from smoking and encouraging them to quit.

Advertisements will run in more than 200 markets throughout the U.S. for at least one year beginning Feb. 11. The campaign will include ads on TV stations such as MTV and print spots in magazines like Teen Vogue. It also will use social media.

"Our kids are the replacement customers for the addicted adult smokers who die or quit each day," said Mitch Zeller, the director of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products. "And that's why we think it's so important to reach out to them—not to lecture them, not to throw statistics at them—but to reach them in a way that will get them to rethink their relationship with tobacco use."

Zeller, who oversaw the anti-tobacco "Truth" campaign while working at the nonprofit American Legacy Foundation in the early 2000s, called the new campaign a "compelling, provocative and somewhat graphic way" of grabbing the attention of more than 10 million young people ages 12 to 17 that are open to, or are already experimenting with, cigarettes.

According to the FDA, nearly 90 percent of adult smokers started using cigarettes by age 18 and more than 700 kids under 18 become daily smokers each day. The agency aims to reduce the number of youth cigarette smokers by at least 300,000 within three years.



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Two of the TV ads show teens walking into a corner store to buy cigarettes. When the cashier tells them it's going to cost them more than they have, the teens proceed to tear off a piece of their skin and use pliers to pull out a tooth in order to pay for their cigarettes. Other ads portray cigarettes as a man dressed in a dirty white shirt and khaki pants bullying teens and another shows teeth being destroyed by a ray gun shooting cigarettes.

The FDA is evaluating the impact of the campaign by following 8,000 people between the ages of 11 and 16 for two years to assess changes in tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

The [campaign](#) announced Tuesday is the first in a series of campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of tobacco use.

In 2011, the FDA said it planned to spend about \$600 million over five years on the campaigns aimed at reducing death and disease caused by tobacco, which is responsible for about 480,000 deaths a year in the U.S.

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