

Marlboro top choice of regular teen smokers

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Cigarette

Picture source: www.howtoquitsmokingtobaccocigarettes.com/

CHICAGO (AP) - Marlboro, the cigarette favored by adults, is also the runaway favorite of U.S. teens who regularly smoke, according to a new federal report released Thursday.

The results led anti-smoking advocates to complain that the same advertising that's supposed to target adults is also influencing teens, even though smoking rates for that age group have dropped in recent years.

"Cigarettes are still the most heavily advertised drug in America," said Dr. Victor Strasburger, a professor of pediatrics at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine and a spokesman for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"It's sad."

The report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 81 percent of established teen smokers preferred the same three brands favored by adults: Marlboro was the choice for 52 percent of high school students; Newport by 21 percent and Camel by 13 percent.

For middle school students, the percentages were 43 percent, 26 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Newport was the overwhelming choice for African-American students, with more than three-quarters of black high school smokers choosing that brand.

The results come from a survey of 54,301 regular smokers, part of the 2004 and 2006 National Youth Tobacco Survey of nearly 5 million 12- to 17-year-olds.

The findings mirror the adult population. The 2007 National Study on Drug Use and Health found that the most popular brands smoked by U.S. adults also were Marlboro, Newport and Camel.

David Sutton, a spokesman at Altria Group Inc., which owns Philip Morris USA and the Marlboro brand, said that adult influence was more likely a factor than advertising.

He said his company has curtailed it by 46 percent in the last decade.

Instead, he said the company focuses on direct-mail marketing to adults and advertising at retailers that sell its brands.

David Howard, a spokesman at the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., maker of Camel cigarettes, said it's clear from Camel's third-place ranking that the company has succeeded in avoiding marketing to young people.

Both tobacco spokesmen also mentioned signs that the teen smoking rate is dropping.

An annual survey by University of Michigan found that, in 2008, smoking rates among American teens were at the lowest levels since the survey began in 1991.

Even so, anti-smoking advocates are calling for even tougher restrictions on advertising and for more no-smoking campaigns.

The CDC is urging Congress to give the Food and Drug Administration the power to regulate tobacco products and marketing - and encouraged funding for anti-smoking campaigns.

Such campaigns include the American Legacy Foundation's national "truth" campaign.

Launched in 2000, it includes an ad showing young people unloading hundreds of body bags and stacking them in the street outside a major tobacco company to illustrate smoking-related deaths.

"We try to have teens rebel against tobacco companies by not smoking. The whole strategy is to make smoking not cool," said Donna Vallone, an official with the Legacy Foundation.

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/2/13/apworld/20090213124131&sec=apworld>