

Fact Sheet #16: Young Women and Tobacco

20% of young adult women (18-24 year olds) in the U.S. are smokers.¹ As marketing efforts by the tobacco industry targeted at women are on the rise, what does the future hold?

What Is Happening?

- Despite a prevalence of young adult women in California of 13.1%, there are populations that have significantly higher rates.² For example, 47% of young lesbian women in the state are smokers, a higher percentage than even young gay men.³
- Socioeconomic status is a significant factor in women's smoking prevalence. Nationally, 29% of women with between 9-11 years of education are smokers. Women with a GED diploma have a prevalence rate of 38%, compared with only 9% of women with a college degree. Women below the poverty line have a prevalence of nearly 27%.¹
- Young women (16-24 year olds) who attempt to quit are more likely to use unassisted quitting methods than assisted quitting methods, most of which are proven to be effective.⁴
- In addition to lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke, tobacco use by women can also cause cervical cancer, and gives women an increased risk for conception delay and infertility. Pregnant women who smoke also give their infants an increased risk of low birth weight and SIDS.⁵
- The leading cause of cancer death in women is lung cancer, surpassing even breast cancer.⁵

Reducing Smoking Among Women: A Synopsis of the US Surgeon General's Report

In 2001, the US Surgeon General reported on the current status of women and smoking. In this report, there were a number of recommendations to reduce the impact of tobacco on women in the U.S. and abroad. Here are some of the highlights:⁵

- **Raise awareness of the impact of smoking on women's health.** Lung cancer kills far more women than breast cancer, yet has only a fraction of the public attention.
- **Counter tobacco industry marketing to women, especially the linking of smoking and themes of freedom and independence.** Women can stop the tobacco industry's co-optation of language from the women's rights movement.
- **In tobacco related research, record and report on gender-specific results.** Focus on women's health concerns. Expand the scope of research to varied groups of women, including ethnic and immigrant populations, SES status, and sexual orientation.
- **Support efforts to reduce SHS exposure to women.** This is essential at both the individual and societal level.

Camel No.9: The Latest TI Scheme



Camel No. 9 is the latest in a long line of tobacco products marketed by the tobacco industry to women, beginning with the body-conscious "reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet" Lucky Strike campaign of the 1930's, and leading up to the ubiquitous Virginia Slims slogan "you've come a long way, baby." "Light and luscious" Camel No. 9 is Facing a public outcry from tobacco

control advocates and women's organizations. The cigarettes, wrapped in pink foil and encased in a pink (or teal for menthol) and black pack, are marketed towards women smokers "dressed to the nines, looking your best⁶." In addition to being armed with traditional print and direct mail campaigns, RJ Reynolds is promoting the latest Camel with lavish, "girls night out"-themed events. Women at these events can not only sample cigarettes, but get massages, makeovers, and take home gift bags filled with makeup and beauty products.⁷ RJ Reynolds claims it merely wants to offer a product that will appeal to women smokers; yet one would be hard-pressed to find a marketing scheme more cynical. Who else besides the tobacco industry would market a product - that kills so many women - directly to them by making it pink?

¹ "Tobacco Use Among Adults - United States, 2005." MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2006; 55(42):1145-1148.

² California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. "18-24 Year Old Smoking Prevalence." 2006. Available at www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco.

³ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. "New data show California Military, Korean Men and LGBT populations smoke much more than others in the state." News Release 2005. Available www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco.

⁴ Use of Cessation Methods Among Smokers Aged 16-24 Years --United States, 2003." MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2006; 55(50):1351-1354.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking for Women. A Report of the Surgeon General. Washington: U.S. Department of Public Health Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office in Smoking and Health, 2001.

⁶ Elliot, Stuart. "A New Camel Brand is Dressed to the Nines." NY Times. 15 February 2007. Available www.nytimes.com.

⁷ Hochberg, Adam. "Critics Fume Over Marketing of No. 9." NPR Morning Edition. 16 March 2007. Available at www.npr.org.

Stay tuned...More Fact Sheets Are Coming Your Way



California Youth Advocacy Network
Phone: (916) 339-3424
Email: info@cyanonline.org