

Tobacco marketing to young women could lead to thousands of premature deaths in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition warns that tobacco marketers are targeting young women and girls

2010 World No Tobacco Day on May 31

OKLAHOMA CITY (May 27, 2010) – On May 31, World No Tobacco Day will focus on tobacco marketing to women and girls. Women comprise about 20 percent of the world’s more than 1 billion smokers. In Oklahoma, almost half of all smokers – or about 350,000 – are women or girls.

The impact of tobacco use among women is staggering. Tobacco use is the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. The risk of developing lung cancer is 13 times higher for women who smoke compared to women who have never smoked. In addition, women who smoke are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack as non-smoking women.

“The tobacco industry is constantly trying to addict young female smokers to replace those who have quit or died,” said Mary Pointer, Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition member. “To end the cycle of addiction in Oklahoma County, we need to work together as a community to counteract these predatory marketing practices.”

Tobacco companies have a long history of sophisticated marketing and advertising tactics targeted specifically to girls and women. Among the most well-known campaigns are:

- Lucky Strike’s infamous “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet” campaign that implied smoking makes women more beautiful and slender
- Virginia Slims “It’s a woman thing” advertising in the 1970s capitalizing on the growing women’s liberation movement in America
- Camel’s aggressive 2007 launch of its new cigarette brand, “No. 9,” which featured spa parties and manicures

The Camel No. 9 cigarettes come in pink packages adorned with a romantic flowery motif and the words “light & luscious.” An article in the journal Pediatrics (April 2010, pp. 619-626) reported that the Camel No. 9 ads were a big hit with young teenage girls. The five year study followed 1036 adolescents to determine which ads most appealed to teenagers. After the start of the Camel No. 9 advertising campaign, the proportion of girls who reported a favorite cigarette ad increased by 10 percentage points – and Camels accounted almost entirely for this increase. The study also found that girls who said they had a “favorite” cigarette ad were 50% more likely to begin smoking than those who did not have a favorite ad.

Most recently, tobacco companies have used trendy giveaways and direct mail campaigns to distribute coupons for cheap cigarettes to young women aged 18-30. Most coupons have a customer-specific bar code that allows the companies to closely track the individual’s purchasing habits. The companies then send more promotional materials to increase their chances of successfully hooking her for life.

According to internal tobacco industry documents, Oklahoma is considered an ideal market for promoting tobacco products. According to Federal Trade Commission estimates, tobacco companies are spending around \$213 million each year to encourage the use of tobacco products among Oklahomans, up from \$83 million in 1998.

“It’s unacceptable that these addictive and deadly products are being marketed so aggressively to young Oklahomans,” said Mary Pointer. “We should all be outraged. The women and girls they hope to addict are our daughters, sisters, aunts and wives, not just dollar signs for tobacco companies.”

To learn more about World No Tobacco Day and other efforts to counteract tobacco industry, contact the Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition at (405) 419-4247. The coalition is a grantee of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust serving Oklahoma County and promoting tobacco prevention, tobacco cessation and smokefree environments.

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The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust was established through a constitutional amendment approved by Oklahoma voters in 2000. While most state governments have failed to keep their promise to use tobacco settlement funds for tobacco prevention and other programs to improve health, Oklahomans have created an endowment to assure that funds will be available for these purposes for generations to come. To learn more go to: www.tset.ok.gov.

Facts about Recent Tobacco Industry Behavior

(Source – U.S. Justice Department, *United States v. Philip Morris*)

On August 17, 2006, the Final Opinion of *United States v. Philip Morris* declared eleven tobacco companies guilty of violating the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), concluding that a “culture of fraud” permeates the tobacco companies’ business practices and that their goal has been “to make money with little, if any, regard for individual illness and suffering, soaring health costs, or the integrity of the legal system.”

On May 22, 2009, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals issued a unanimous opinion upholding the 2006 U.S. District Court findings that “the evidence in this case clearly establishes that Defendants have not ceased engaging in unlawful activity... and that “...their continuing conduct misleads consumers in order to maximize Defendants revenues by recruiting new smokers (the majority of whom are under the age of 18), preventing current smokers from quitting, and thereby sustaining the industry.”

Facts about Impact of Tobacco on Women’s Health

(Source – National Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids)

Cancer

- Lung cancer death rates among women increased by more than 600 percent between 1950 and 2003. In 1987, lung cancer surpassed breast cancer to become the leading cause of cancer death among women.
- More than 66,000 U.S. women die of lung cancer each year.
- While lung cancer death rates are decreasing for men – and the overall cancer death rate is decreasing for both men and women – lung cancer death rates have yet to decline among women, according to a December 2008 report by the nation’s leading cancer organizations.
- Smoking causes about 90 percent of all lung cancer deaths among women.
- The risk of developing lung cancer is 13 times higher for current women smokers compared to lifelong non-smokers.
- A survey from the American Legacy Foundation found that 80 percent of American women mistakenly believe that breast cancer is the primary cause of cancer death among women.
- While women smoke less than men, many nonsmoking women still suffer increased risk of lung cancer because their husbands or partners smoke.

Reproductive Health

- Smoking reduces a woman’s fertility. Women smokers tend to take longer to conceive than women nonsmokers, and women smokers are at a higher risk of not being able to get pregnant at all. Furthermore, more cigarettes women smoked per day are associated with decreased fertility rates.
- Research studies have found that smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke among pregnant women is a major cause of miscarriage, stillbirths, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) after birth. Mothers who smoke have double the rate of premature delivery compared to nonsmoking mothers.
- There is a clear relationship between the number of cigarettes smoked during pregnancy and low birth weight babies.
- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy directly increase the risk of health and behavioral problems including: abnormal blood pressure in infants and children, cleft palates and lips, childhood leukemia, infantile colic, childhood wheezing, respiratory disorders in childhood, eye problems during childhood, mental retardation, attention deficit disorder, behavioral problems and other learning and developmental problems.

Heart Disease

- Cardiovascular diseases are the number one killers of both men and women. Each year more than 450,000 women die of these diseases. Cardiovascular diseases caused by smoking include coronary heart disease, atherosclerosis and stroke, among others.
- Women who smoke are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack as non-smoking women. The risk of developing coronary heart disease increases with the number of cigarettes smoked per day, the total number of smoking years, and earlier age of initiation.
- Women smokers have a higher relative risk of developing cardiovascular disease than men. The reasons for the difference are not yet known, but could be due to tobacco smoke having an adverse effect on estrogen.
- Women who smoke and use oral contraceptives are up to 40 times more likely to have a heart attack than women who neither smoke nor use birth control.
- While women smoke less than men, many nonsmoking women still suffer increased risk of heart disease from exposure to secondhand smoke because their husbands or partners smoke.