

Many teens light up to lose weight, study suggests

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(HealthDay)—Many American teens may smoke to control or lose

weight, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 10,500 youngsters between the ages of 11 and 15. Among frequent smokers, 46 percent of girls and 30 percent of boys said weight control was one of the reasons they smoked.

The study also revealed that smoking to lose weight was much more common among teens who felt they needed to drop weight. Girls who believed they were "much too fat" were nearly 225 percent more likely to smoke to lose weight than girls who felt their weight was about right.

Boys who thought they were "much too fat" were nearly 145 percent more likely to smoke for [weight loss](#) than boys who were happy with their weight, the study found.

The researchers also found that white teens were more than twice as likely as black teens to smoke for weight loss.

The findings help "us better understand why people choose to engage in risky health behaviors. It's not always just about the immediate pleasure or enjoyment; sometimes it's a means to another end," study author John Cawley, a professor of policy analysis and management at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., said in a university news release.

Anti-smoking policies could also be altered to be more effective, the researchers added.

For example, Cawley suggested, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration could prohibit cigarette makers from promoting the idea that smoking can help people control or lose weight. Doing so might make teens less likely to buy cigarettes if taxes were increased, he said.

"There's a strong economic case for taxing cigarettes. It's just that the

taxes may not decrease consumption among girls as much as you might hope or think," he said. "But if you can break the perceived connection between smoking and [weight](#) loss, you may increase their responsiveness to taxes."

The study was published recently in the journal *Health Economics*.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [youth and smoking](#).

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