

Smoking Does NOT Facilitate Weight Loss

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Abstract

Does smoking help you lose weight? Many teens start smoking because they believe that smoking helps them lose weight. My hypothesis is that smoking does not facilitate weight loss. I found most of my research from peer reviewed articles and government or education articles. I found that smoking may suppress a person's appetite. However, it won't help raise someone's metabolism to lose weight. From my research I realized that the actual effect smoking has on a person's body is not worth the risk of trying to lose weight. There are many other options for losing weight, like exercising or eating more healthy foods. An article I found had this quote to promote awareness among teens: "If smoking helped people lose weight, then all smokers would be skinny."

Introduction

Many young girls start smoking because they believe that it is a way to lose weight. The media seems to have an influence on why girls believe they should be thin. The portrait of women in the media communicates that "thin is in," so girls may use unhealthy methods as they aspire to these standards. There is a circulating myth that smoking helps people lose weight. There are a few components in the media that are helping the myth stay afloat, especially cigarette ads, which portray thin women smoking, and movies, which portray sexy, thin women smoking and looking wonderful while doing so. This may be why adolescent girls start smoking. Cigarette companies spend between two and three hundred million dollars on ads each year. About 60 million of this money is spent in "youth-oriented" magazines (Kuwana). Many people believe that smoking increases the rate of metabolism and suppresses appetite.

Food and physical activity are essential to life, whereas cigarettes are not. However, the media pressures the use of all three. In a peer-reviewed article, girls who absolutely believed that smoking helped them lose weight had thinness on the top of their priority list. Since being thin is most valuable to these girls and since they believe smoking is a way to lose weight, then maybe they are not eating as much. By not eating as much adolescent girls are losing weight and seeing the pounds come off. Thus they believe that smoking really does help them lose weight, when in fact it is just that they are eating less. My hypothesis is that smoking does not facilitate weight loss.

Method

For my study I went online and searched for peer-reviewed articles on the topic of smoking among adolescent girls. I also found most of my charts from government and education sites. I searched mostly for articles about adolescent girls and the relationship between smoking and their beliefs on weight.

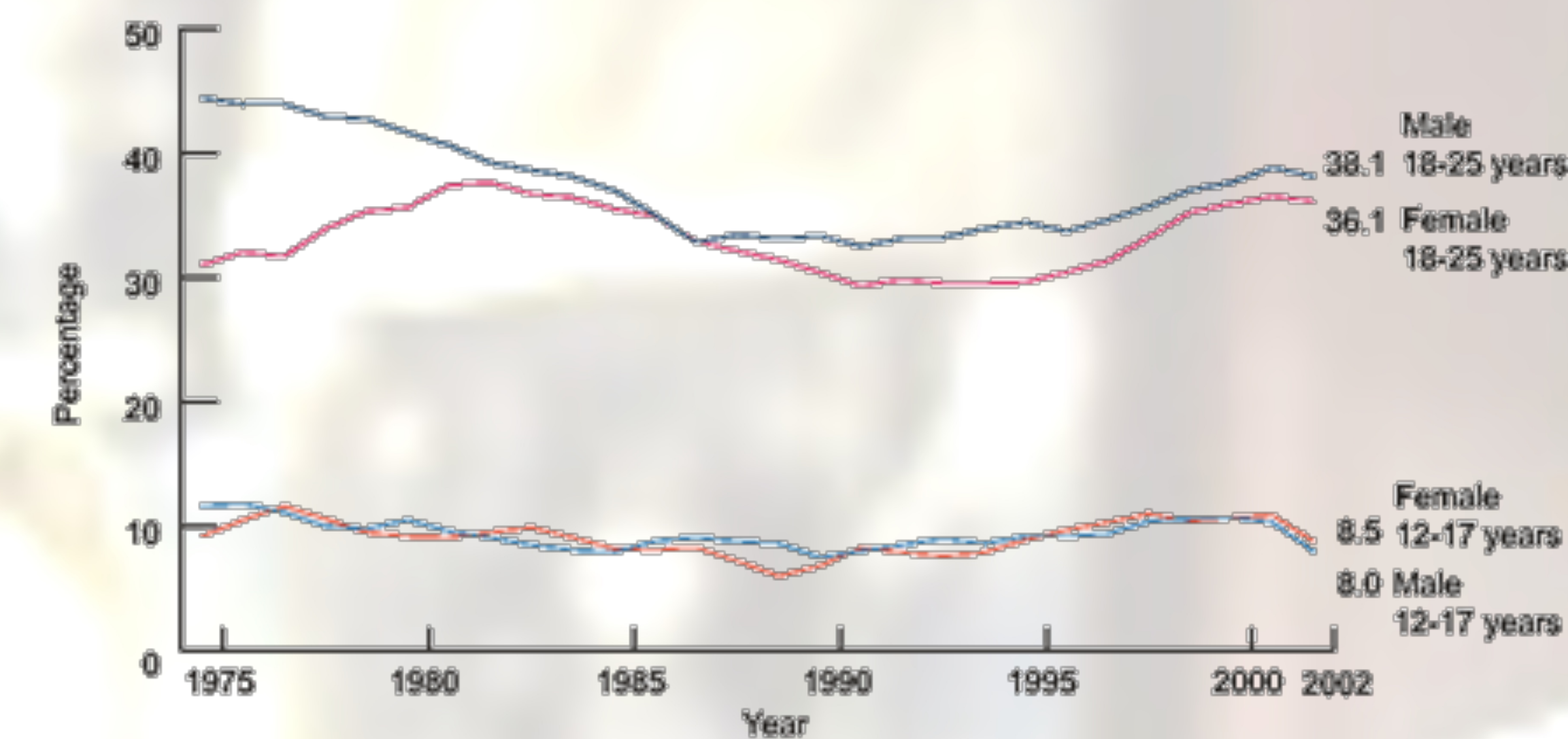
Results

I have found that obesity has been tied to smoking habits, alcohol consumption, and television viewing (Koh-Banerjee). In association with smoking and watching television, the study showed that there was an increase of 1.98 cm to 0.59 cm in waist gain. I also found that smokers had a hard time staying on a proper diet. In one of my articles (Lahti-Koski), I found that people need to be educated about obesity control and then maybe more people will know not to smoke. In one study that was done on weight loss (Hansen D), there was no relationship found between age, gender, and smoking status. So in this case, whether a subject smoked or not, it had no effect on their weight.

The graphs show that girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four smoked more than women who were thirty-five and older. One study showed that women take pleasure in the taste and smell of cigarettes, whereas men did not (Mercer). In the study, they plugged the noses of thirty women and twenty-one men. When the women had their noses plugged they took less puffs and claimed they did not get as much pleasure out of the experience. The men had no change whatsoever. Another big concern that women had was the fear of gaining weight if they quit smoking. I found that initially when a person quits smoking they will gain some weight. However, that weight will be lost after a few weeks. The reason some people gain weight after quitting smoking is because they replace cigarettes with food. After the nicotine is washed out of their system, their eating habits go back to normal.

Figure 1: **Daily Cigarette Use in Lifetime by Age and Sex: 1975-2002***

Source (II.2): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health



*Note: Data for years before 2002 are calculated based on respondents' current age and the age at which they first smoked cigarettes.

Discussion

Through all of my research there was no connection between smoking and weight loss. Many girls still believe that smoking would help them lose weight. However, no study showed that they actually lost weight. Most of my research connected smoking habits with obesity. Smoking habits, alcohol use, and watching television for 20 hours or more a week were studied in connection with weight. Unfortunately, there was not a direct statement or data showing that smoking does not facilitate weight loss.

The overall effects of smoking are not worth trying to lose a little weight. The possibilities of lung cancer, stroke, or heart attack are being realized more and more among the public because of truth ads and research. More effective ways of losing weight are exercise and eating healthier foods. I believe if someone found the actual answer to whether or not smoking facilitates weight loss, then maybe fewer teen girls would start smoking to lose weight.

The studies I was able to find clearly demonstrate that there is no relationship between smoking and weight control. Smoking simply provides the difficulties associated with a harmful addiction, but does not result in weight loss or control.

Figure 2:

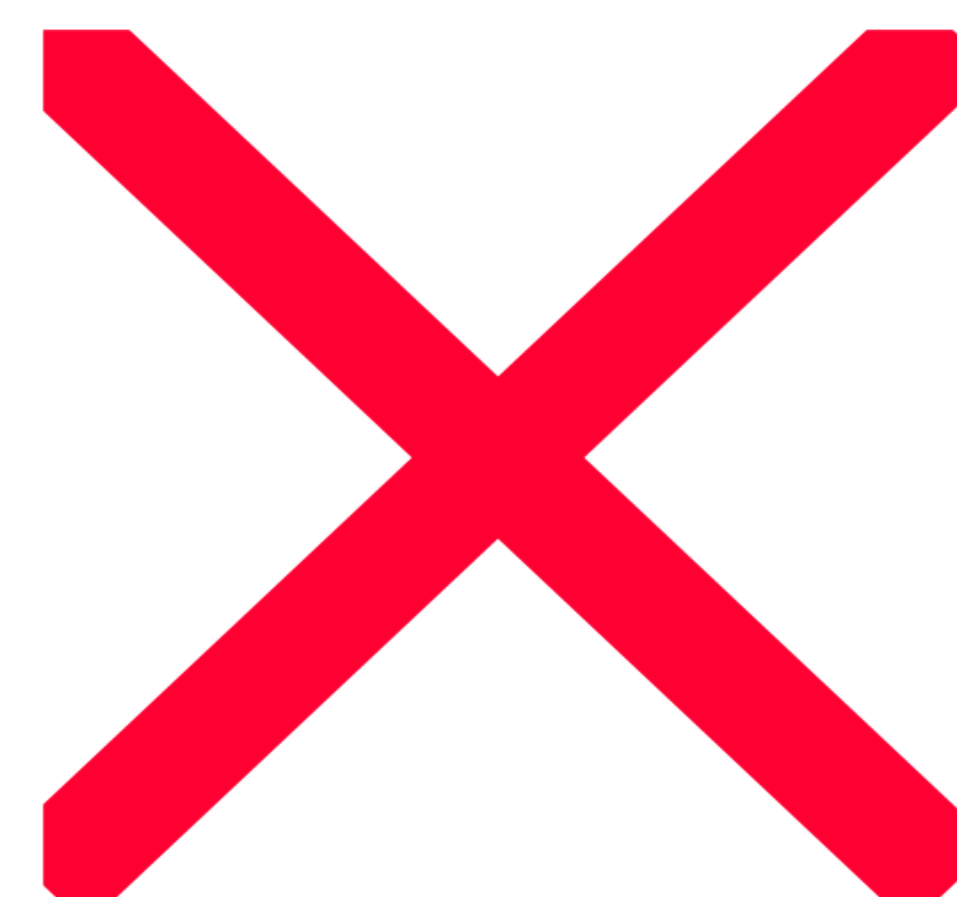
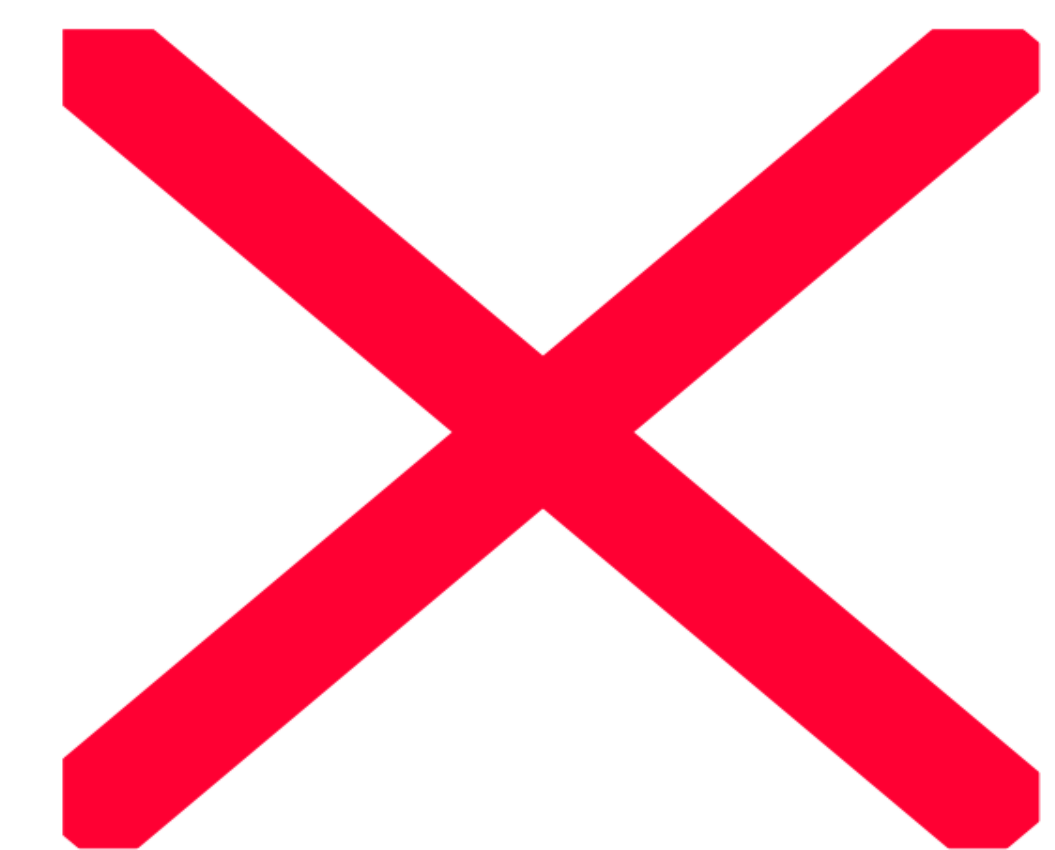


Figure 3: Relationship Between Height and Weight



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