

## The Myths of Tobacco Use

By Cheryl Dudley

### Facts and Stats

#### “B+” Average for August

According to Idaho Code 39-5701 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must inspect each business that sells tobacco to ensure that it does not sell tobacco to minors. For August, 2004:

- ❖ 218 Vendors were inspected. \*
- ❖ 24 Vendors sold to the inspecting minor.
- ❖ The compliance rate for the month of August 2004 was 88.99

\*Inspections where purchase attempts were made.

### Prevent the Sale Website

[www.preventthesale.com/idaho](http://www.preventthesale.com/idaho)

- Learn about the law
- Take the tobacco quiz
- See what the ID’s look like
- Play the Game “Would You Sell to This Person?”

### Historical Myths About Tobacco

It was once believed that tobacco held great medicinal properties. The American Indians used it to cure toothaches, burns, rashes, frostbite, and malignant tumors, to name a few. European doctors took a great interest in these supposed cures, and soon believed that daily tobacco use could cleanse all impurities including healing long-standing wounds. It was particularly praised for its prevention of bubonic plague in Europe.

Soon the boys of Eton College were smoking a pipe every morning to keep them healthy. According to Jorévin de Rochefort in records of his travels throughout England in 1666, “When the children went to school, they carried in their satchels, with their books, a pipe of tobacco, which their mothers took care to fill early in the morning, it serving them instead of a breakfast; and that at the accustomed hour every one laid aside his book to light his pipe, the master smoking with them, and teaching them how to hold their pipes and draw in the tobacco; thus accustoming them to it from their youth, believing it absolutely necessary for a man's health.”

The medical attention to tobacco wasn’t confined to England. The Chinese used it as a treatment for colds, malaria, skin parasites and

diseases, as well as obesity. When mixed with pine resin, its inhalation was claimed to remedy bad circulation. The Hottentots made it into powder and applied it to scorpion bites.

In spite of the supposed health benefits of tobacco use, there were other opinions. One of the most famous doctors of the seventeenth century, Hadrianus Falckenburgius, believed that tobacco injured the brain. Soon the medical evidence proved that tobacco did not set broken bones, or clear away skin rashes, or cure cancer, or prevent the plague. Doctors had fallen into the common error of observing what seemed evident – that the immediate effects of tobacco raised a patient's spirits. Even today, this is known to sometimes do as much for recovery as the most powerful drug. This optimistic behavior drove doctors to the conclusion that tobacco could cure everything.

Now that we are educated about the health risks of tobacco, the social benefits of smoking are a major concern. Smoking is often viewed as a social activity, a means of comfort, or reward.

The media portrays conflicting messages about smoking. Movies often portray smoking as glamorous, cool, and a means of maintaining friendship, while anti-smoking campaigns focus on the realities of

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## Myths of Tobacco Use...

smoking – remember the commercial about Denise - the woman on TV who talks through the tracheotomy in her throat as the result of tobacco-related cancer?

Millions are willing to take the health risks in order to have the social benefits, or perhaps even the “medical” benefits of weight control and the feeling of well-being that cigarettes offer. With the teen notion that they are immortal, it is no surprise that they opt to be socially “cool” without thinking much about their health. Most teens live for the moment — and preventing them from smoking is a huge task.

Yet, as tobacco vendors, you are in a critical position to prevent the sale to minors. Not only is it the law to not sell tobacco to anyone under 18 years old, but your efforts make an impact on teen smoking. This impact has a direct affect on the health and well-being of Idaho’s youth and our future generation. Preventing the sale of tobacco to minors cannot be done without you!

*As tobacco vendors, you are the first line of defense in the battle, and the decrease in teen smoking can be partially attributed to you.*

### Did You Know?

- \*Of the 4,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke, 53 are known to cause cancer.
- \*A new study suggests that keeping children who are entering their teen years from seeing R-rated movies may help prevent them from smoking.
- \*Scientists have found that heavy smokers have less grey matter in their brains, which could make them more impulsive than non-smokers.
- \*Hollywood's romance with tobacco has reignited to levels last seen in the 1950s.
- \*A preliminary study in Tasmania into Alzheimer's disease has found there is a link between the condition and smoking.
- \*People who smoke are up to four times more likely to suffer blindness later in life from age-related macular degeneration (AMD) than nonsmokers, says a study in this week's British Medical Journal.
- \*A person who normally smokes a pack of cigarettes a day can save nearly \$1,300 in their first smoke-free year.
- \*Adults who smoke heavily develop poorer memories in middle age, according to a new British study.

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#### WHAT'S INSIDE!

- ◆ Myths of Tobacco Use
- ◆ Did You Know?
- ◆ Facts and Stats
- ◆ PreventtheSale.com Website

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