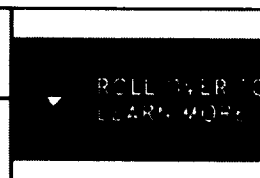




Taking an HIV regimen is a challenge



Lo
[

HOME CHANNELS PERSONALS CHAT YELLOW PAGES SHOPPING MOBILE

Choose yo

Travel | Entertainment | News | Health | Business/Careers | Families | Style | Dating | Video

Gay.com » Health » HIV

Getting Physical: Kicking butts -- gays and smoking

Benjamin Ryan



Here's a trick question: What's the most dangerous health problem facing gay men?

No, it's not HIV/AIDS -- it's smoking.

Diseases related to tobacco use kill more gays than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, murder and street drugs combined. We're talking about more than 30,000 gays and lesbians a year, according to the American Cancer Society. This estimate is actually highly conservative, because it supposes that gays smoke in amounts equal to members of the general population.

Well, they don't. A recent study found that 36 percent of LGBT adults smoke. That's compared with 25 percent of all adults. This stark difference exists notwithstanding the fact that gays are significantly more likely than straights to believe smoking increases their risk of lung cancer and heart disease, and that it is likely to shorten their lifespan.

Smoking shaves about six to 10 years off your life. Even having just one to four cigarettes a day triples your risk of dying of lung cancer or heart disease.

So what's the problem? With all this business about going to the gym and being in shape, and with HIV's insidiousness hanging over our community, how is it that we are so behind the times when it comes to such a fundamental facet of our health? (And have gays just not caught on to the fact that smoking causes -- *oasp!* -- wrinkles?)

More Ben Ryan

- Statutory rape
- Does life end at 40?
- STD Partner notification
- Where are all the condoms?
- Archive

More on Gay.com

- Anchor's death linked to smoking
- Tips for quitting smoking
- Data: Gay youth smoke more
- Lesbian, bi teens more likely to s

More stories about these t

-- Select a topic --

PROMOTION

Taking an HIV regimen is a challenge

ROLL OVER TO LEARN MORE

Article Tools

- Printer-friendly version
- Discuss this article



Taking an HIV regimen is a challenge

GAY.COM

Lo

HOME CHANNELS PERSONALS CHAT YELLOW PAGES SHOPPING MOBILE

Choose yo

Travel | Entertainment | News | Health | Business/Careers | Families | Style | Dating | Video

Gay.com » Health » HIV

Getting Physical: Kicking butts -- gays and smoking

(Page: 2 of 5)

The typical answers are that the tobacco industry is to blame for marketing to gays, that gays spend a lot of time in smoky bars where they use cigarettes as a way to meet one another ("Got a light?"), and that they smoke to alleviate depression and feelings of alienation related to their sexuality.

There is truth to all of these assertions, even if they don't make up the full picture.

Bob Gordon is a project director for the California LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership, the country's only statewide anti-smoking group targeting gays. Lamenting that Big Tobacco outspends the nation's anti-smoking groups by 18 to 1, he informed me that members of the tobacco industry "have been relentless in sponsoring organizations and targeting advertising" toward the gay community.

The most reprehensible example is the aptly titled "Project SCUM," which RJ Reynolds launched in the mid-1990s under strict secrecy and which was later exposed by subpoenas. Standing for "Sub-Culture Urban Marketing," the market research project studied the gay male and homeless communities in San Francisco's Tenderloin District in hope of developing cigarette brands that each "subculture" would like. For gays, the result was the Red Kamel brand, with its hip, retro packaging.

In 1992, Benson & Hedges was the first to market cigarettes directly to gays, with an ad in *Genre*. By 1999, tobacco was the top ad category in *Out*. From 1995 to 1999, tobacco companies

More Ben Ryan

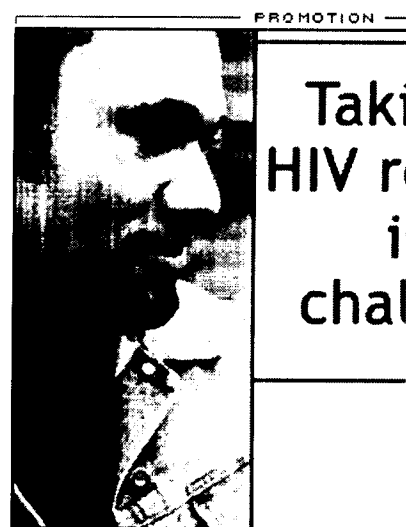
- Statutory rape
- Does life end at 40?
- STD Partner notification
- Where are all the condoms?
- Archive

More on Gay.com

- Anchor's death linked to smoking
- Tips for quitting smoking
- Data: Gay youth smoke more
- Lesbian, bi teens more likely to s

More stories about these to

-- Select a topic --



Article Tools

- Printer-friendly version
- Discuss this article

sponsored 44 AIDS events and AIDS service organizations. In fact, in 1994, Philip Morris was Gay Men's Health Crisis' top donor, at \$150,000. The tobacco giant gave more than \$14 million to HIV/AIDS causes between 1986 and 2001.

page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[<prev page](#) [next page >](#)

Related local gay resource:

- HIV / AIDS Groups & Foundation
- Pharmacies
- HIV/AIDS Doctors & Clinics
- Nutrition & Vitamins
- All Health Listings
- All US Listings

Discuss this article

Be the first to comment on this article

Today in shopping



Hollywood's hottest

...have put on sexy (you). Check out the Klepto.



[Company info](#) | [Advertising info](#) | [Personals affiliates](#)
[Privacy policy](#) | [User agreement](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#)



©1995-2005 GAY.COM INTERACTIVE SERVICES. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. LEGAL NOTICE



GAY.COM

Lo
[

HOME CHANNELS PERSONALS CHAT YELLOW PAGES SHOPPING MOBILE

Choose yo

Travel | Entertainment | News | Health | Business/Careers | Families | Style | Dating | Video

Gay.com » Health » HIV

Getting Physical: Kicking butts -- gays and smoking

(Page: 3 of 5)

The irony of these figures is too tragic. One New England study found that more than 70 percent of HIV-positive adults are smokers. In another study, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York found that HIV-positive smokers are at increased risk for bacterial pneumonia, emphysema, asthma and an array of cancers.

Then there is the social aspect of smoking. No one can deny the pressure to conform when everyone in the bar is puffing away. Also, sharing a cigarette or a light is an easy way to open a dialogue with a guy.

In this capacity, I'm lucky to live in New York City. Like California before it, the city changed its laws in 2003 to outlaw smoking in almost all indoor public spaces. (New York State quickly followed suit.) I'll admit that I do have the occasional cigarette while drinking, so I was quite relieved to be without the extra pressure to smoke, not to mention the joy of inhaling in a room devoid of secondhand fumes.

The year before the ban took effect, the city also jacked up the local cigarette tax from 8 cents to \$1.50, bringing the average name-brand price to \$7 or \$8 a pack. What was the result of these changes? In one year, New York saw an 11 percent drop in adult smoking. No word on how gays followed this trend, though there certainly was a lot of grumbling on their part about the projected end of nightlife. In some ways they were right: These laws prompted a changing of the guard -- as some of the smokiest bars closed and others replete with outside smoking

More Ben Ryan

- Statutory rape
- Does life end at 40?
- STD Partner notification
- Where are all the condoms?
- Archive

More on Gay.com



- Anchor's death linked to smoking
- Tips for quitting smoking
- Data: Gay youth smoke more
- Lesbian, bi teens more likely to s

More stories about these t

-- Select a topic --

PROMOTION

Article Tools

-  Printer-friendly version
-  Discuss this article

patios, apparently inhaled the business.

page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[<prev page](#) [next page >](#)

Related local gay resource:

- HIV / AIDS Groups & Foundation
- Pharmacies
- HIV/AIDS Doctors & Clinics
- Nutrition & Vitamins
- All Health Listings
- All US Listings

Discuss this article

Be the first to comment on this article

Today in shopping



N10Z Pheromone
Make yourself mysteriously irresistible.



[Company info](#) | [Advertising info](#) | [Personals affiliates](#)
[Privacy policy](#) | [User agreement](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#)



©1995-2005 GAY.COM INTERACTIVE SERVICES. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [LEGAL NOTICE](#)



Lo
[

HOME CHANNELS PERSONALS CHAT YELLOW PAGES SHOPPING MOBILE

Choose yo

Travel | Entertainment | News | Health | Business/Careers | Families | Style | Dating | Video

Gay.com » Health » HIV

Getting Physical: Kicking butts -- gays and smoking

(Page: 4 of 5)

The third most common explanation for gays' heavy smoking is that, on the whole, the community suffers from markedly higher rates of depression. Many studies over the years have shown a high correlation between mental illness and addiction to nicotine, since the drug affects the same neurotransmitters as antidepressants. In other words: People are self-medicating.

But what's the missing link? None of this information is exactly big news, and even though we have this knowledge, anti-smoking efforts continue to fall flat.

In his genius pop-psychology work, "The Tipping Point," New Yorker writer Malcom Gladwell writes about the addictive nature of smoking and provides some complex answers that apply quite neatly to the gay community.

Gladwell compares smoking to a kind of speech. By virtue of smoking, one man gives another the tacit approval to commit his own act of suicide. The other man follows suit because he wants to be cool. Because, Gladwell writes, "Smoking was never cool. *Smokers are cool.*"

Need I say more about the gay community's desperate desire to be cool? It's unfortunate enough that we may be drawn to cigarettes because of intrinsic facets of our personalities. But it's even worse that we then reel everyone else in by example. If only we could do a better job of loving ourselves as individuals and stop worrying so much about what the other guy is doing. Yes, that's going to happen any day now, just you wait.

More Ben Ryan

- Statutory rape
- Does life end at 40?
- STD Partner notification
- Where are all the condoms?
- Archive

More on Gay.com

- Anchor's death linked to smoking
- Tips for quitting smoking
- Data: Gay youth smoke more
- Lesbian, bi teens more likely to s

More stories about these t

-- Select a topic --

PROMOTION

--	--

Article Tools

- Printer-friendly version
- Discuss this article

SUSTIVA

GAY.COM

Lo

HOME CHANNELS PERSONALS CHAT YELLOW PAGES SHOPPING MOBILE

Choose yo

Travel | Entertainment | News | Health | Business/Careers | Families | Style | Dating | Video

Gay.com » Health » HIV

Getting Physical: Kicking butts -- gays and smoking

(Page: 5 of 5)

OK, so now that we've gone through the reasons why gays smoke and realized how impossible it is to pick all of them apart and prevent smoking altogether, the power to quit, of course, remains in the hands of each smoker.

Without sounding too preachy (too late, I know), don't just throw in the towel on your life. Even if you quit smoking in middle age, you can still cut in half your risk of an early death. For more information on quitting smoking, visit www.smokefree.gov.

Benjamin Ryan is a freelance writer specializing in health reporting. A native of Seattle, he graduated cum laude from Columbia University and lives in Manhattan. Contact him at benjaminryan@gay.com.

page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#)

[<prev page](#)

Discuss this article

Be the first to comment on this article

More Ben Ryan

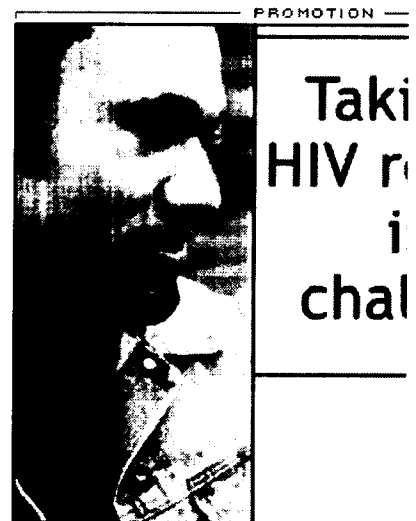
- Statutory rape
- Does life end at 40?
- STD Partner notification
- Where are all the condoms?
- Archive

More on Gay.com

- Anchor's death linked to smoking
- Tips for quitting smoking
- Data: Gay youth smoke more
- Lesbian, bi teens more likely to s

More stories about these topics

-- Select a topic --



Article Tools

- Printer-friendly version
- Discuss this article