



# The Role of Movies as a Social Factor in the Adequate Adoption of Sun-Protection Measures



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## Introduction

Despite the increased public awareness concerning the risks of excessive UV-exposure, real-life data still documents high rates of sunbathing and inadequate use of sun-protection measures. Among the possible explanations are misconceptions over the correct use of sun protection, a sense of invulnerability towards skin cancer and a common perception of the attractiveness of tanned skin. The objective of this report is to analyze the role of movies in obtaining a healthy sun-attitude.

## Materials and Methods

Films can influence the public's impression of beauty standards<sup>2</sup> and promote certain types of social attitudes. When it comes to sun exposure, movies often indirectly glamorize sunbathing: iconic scenes, such as the ones where Alain Delon and Romy Schneider lie indolently at a poolside in "The Swimming Pool" (1969), or where Dustin Hoffman sunbathes for hours in 1967's "The Graduate" are only a few of such examples. Scenes with Robert Redford relaxing under the sun in "The Great Gatsby" (1974) or with Jude Law sun-tanning in 1999's "The Talented Mr. Ripley", subconsciously associate sunbathing with a pleasant lifestyle that the public then aspires to rather than rejects. Such representations still occur even in the modern filmography: in movies, such as 2017's "Call Me by Your Name," 2013's "Adore," and 2015's "A Bigger Splash," viewers watch the protagonists enjoying long sunbathing sessions, where the feeling of "dolce-vita" occupies the spotlight so that alarming thoughts concerning future unpleasant health issues do not even remotely occur. Furthermore, sunburns due to excessive UV-exposure are often depicted in movies in a comical way that trivializes their prognostic importance as skin-cancer risk factors, as suggested by the sunburn scenes seen in "The Heartbreak Kid" (2007) or in "That 70's Show" (1998-2006).



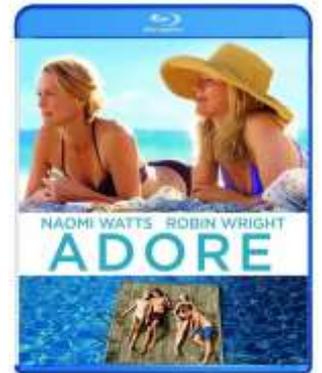
Movie Poster "The Swimming Pool" (1969), with Romy Schneider and Alain Delon



Robert Redford in the movie "The Great Gatsby" (1974)



Timothee Chalamet in the movie "Call me by your name" (2017)



Movie Poster "Adore" (2013)



Dustin Hoffman in the movie "The Graduate" (1967)

## Results

Children and adolescents are often susceptible to the influencing potential of the media regarding the adoption of specific social practices, including tobacco and alcohol consumption. In several studies, a high exposure to smoking in films is associated with an increased possibility of an early smoking initiation amongst adolescents, while other surveys have shown that alcohol exposure in movies is linked with a facilitated transition towards underage drinking. No large-scale population-based studies concerning the association of movie sunbathing with a subsequent high-risk sun attitude are present in the literature so far. However, it would not come as a surprise that the hazardous UV-exposure behaviors frequently depicted in films could potentially affect susceptible groups regarding the adoption of high-risk sun habits and insufficient UV-protection.

## Conclusions

After acknowledging the role of films as a social risk factor, health organizations like the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) have been advocating against the promotion of tobacco products and movie smoking. Movie sunbathing should also receive the right amount of attention by skin cancer prevention campaigns, since restrictions of hazardous sunbathing/indoor tanning depictions in films could have a significant impact in promoting a healthier lifestyle among adolescents and young adults. Dermatological societies and public health authorities, along with endorsing UV-protective practices through advertising and social media, could address the promotion of a healthier sun attitude in movies and advertisements, so as to minimize the implications of unsafe depictions in the behavior of the general public.