

VAPING: More than a Fad

According to Louisiana's Youth Tobacco Survey in 2017, the number of middle school students who vape nearly doubled from 4.8% in 2015 to 8.6% in 2017.

So what exactly is this harmful behavior attracting so many of our youth? Vaping products/e-cigarettes are battery operated devices where users inhale an aerosol that usually contains nicotine, flavorings, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin and other ingredients. Although, progress has been made in the decline of traditional tobacco products amongst middle and high school students, new vaping products and hookahs have taken the place of the combustible cigarette and smokeless tobacco. The use of vape products, e-cigarettes, or other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) have increased dramatically over the past couple of years, especially for youth.

Statistics

The FDA reports among middle and high school students, 3.62 million were current users of e-cigarettes in 2018.

From 2017-2018 e-cigarette use increased 78 percent among high school students (11.7% to 20.8%) and 48% among middle school students (4.4% to 4.9%).

Attractive nicotine juice flavors such as mint, bubble gum, and even Crème Brule have been cited as the primary reason for increased use.

Risks: the known and unknown

There is a misconception that the aerosols from vape products are harmless, but in truth, the nicotine found in these products causes harm to the developing brain. The human brain is not fully developed until the age of 25, nicotine exposure to the brain causes addiction, impacts learning, retaining memory and the ability to focus. All salt-based e-juice/liquid contains nicotine and the level of nicotine can be significantly higher than of a single cigarette. The nicotine level in JUUL, which is one of the leading e-cigarette products for youth, equals that of a pack of cigarettes. As for the Suorin Drop, the nicotine level is that of three packs of cigarettes. Beyond the nicotine, there are other potentially dangerous chemicals found in e-cigarettes.

The FDA reviewed eighteen (18) different e-cigarette cartridges and found toxic and carcinogenic chemicals in some, but not others. All but one for the cartridges labeled "no nicotine" did contain nicotine. While the FDA is working to better regulate and are removing flavors from being sold in stores, it does not mitigate the harmful effects of e-cigarettes/ENDS products.

What can you do?

Learn to recognize a vaping device as some are made to resemble pens, USB sticks, and other everyday items. Be honest with your teens and talk to them about the dangers of vaping, e-cigarettes, and other ENDS devices. While it is stated to be safer than traditional and combustible tobacco products, does not mean the products are safe. Because ENDS products are new there is not extensive knowledge on the harm that comes with the use of these products, but we also do not want our children to be the ones used to find out.

For more help on how to talk to your child(ren) about the dangers of e-cigarettes, vape products, including JUUL a, please visit the Surgeon General's website at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/>

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