

Disposable E-Cigarettes: An Emerging Trend in Youth Tobacco Use

Policy and regulation are key factors in reducing youth tobacco use. As the numbers of youth vaping soared over the past few years, initiatives to reduce youth access to electronic cigarettes have been at the forefront of tobacco regulation. Following epidemic levels of youth use of e-cigarettes and the popularity of certain flavors of e-cigarette products that appeal to kids, the FDA enforced a policy banning the manufacturing, distribution and sale of flavored cartridge-based e-cigarettes other than tobacco or menthol. However, the policy which took effect last February only targeted reusable vaping devices, like JUUL, and the flavor restrictions did not include disposable vaping products like the Puff Bar, Blu Disposable or the POSH Vape. Tobacco prevention experts say this loophole in policy has already begun to impact youth. According to Rebekah Willoughby, Tobacco Public Health Educator with the Lancaster County Health Department, “While it is encouraging that 1.8 million fewer youth vaped in 2020 compared to 2019, it is worrisome that newer disposable e-cigarettes, like Puff Bar, threaten that progress. 2020 data shows disposable e-cigarette use has increased from 2.4% in 2019 to 26.5% today.”



Disposable e-cigarettes (pictured above) are designed to be used and thrown away once the e-liquid has run dry. They are portable, discreet and initially less expensive than a rechargeable electronic device. According to several pro-vaping resources, following the federal ban on flavored vape pods, disposable e-cigarettes have become increasingly popular. Disposable vapes come in a variety of brands and flavors. Most are made with nicotine salt e-juices that provide a stronger hit. Depending on the manufacturer, one disposable e-cigarette ranges from 200-500 puffs and can be purchased on average from \$6 to \$20. The Puff Bar, a more popular disposable e-cigarette brand, can contain about as much nicotine as two or three packs of cigarettes and can be purchased for around \$8. The market for disposable vapes is quickly growing and in addition to being sold in stores, they are likewise sold all over the internet. Despite the fact that Nebraska law now requires the legal minimum age for use or purchase of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) to be 21 years of age, most online stores only require consumers to acknowledge that they are 21 by electronically entering a birthdate at checkout.

As a test, SCIP recently purchased three different disposable e-cigarettes brands via the Vapor4Life online store. There was no verification of ID necessary to complete the purchase.

Despite ongoing sales of flavored disposable e-cigarettes, the FDA has begun efforts to enforce stricter policies for companies who manufacture the flavored products. Additional policies and regulations are necessary to create environmental change to reduce youth vaping. According to the CEO and President of the nonprofit public health organization, The Truth Initiative, “without stronger federal polices that are free of loopholes that allowed for flavored disposable sales to soar, the progress that has been made to reduce youth vaping and tobacco use will be reversed or slowed significantly.”

In addition to policy change, prevention education continues to be an important piece in reducing youth vaping and tobacco use. Please visit the below web resources to learn more on how you can help in youth prevention initiatives:

Surgeon General: Know the Risks of Youth Tobacco Use
<https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/knowtherisks.html>

The Truth Initiative: Why Vaping is an Important Issue
<https://truthinitiative.org/our-top-issues/vaping-issue>

Tobacco Free Lancaster County: Juuling, Vaping and E-Cigarettes
<https://tobaccofreelancastercounty.org/electronic-cigarettes/>

Partnership to End Addiction: How To Talk With Your Child About Vaping
<https://drugfree.org/article/how-to-talk-with-your-kids-about-vaping/#>

References:

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/national-survey-shows-encouraging-decline-overall-youth-e-cigarette-use-concerning-uptick-use>
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-notifies-companies-including-puff-bar-remove-flavored-disposable-e-cigarettes-and-youth>
<https://vapingdaily.com/>
<https://www.vapor4life.com/>
<https://truthinitiative.org/>
<https://tobaccofreelancastercounty.org/electronic-cigarettes/>