

Youth Vaping: Protecting our Youth

E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. youth (CDC). According to a national survey by the CDC, 3.6 million teens reported current e-cigarette use in 2018. This is more than double the number of middle and high school students who reported using e-cigarettes in 2017 (1.5 million in 2017). In an effort to highlight this growing health concern, the Surgeon General released an advisory on e-cigarette use among youth in December 2018. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services media release, the advisory “stresses the importance of protecting children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks by immediately addressing the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use”.

Parents, schools and health professionals play a critical role in addressing the dangers of youth e-cigarette use by engaging in conversations with youth to promote education and awareness. Below are important talking points that should be included in these conversations:

What is an e-cigarette?

- E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that deliver nicotine, flavorings, and other substances. They work by heating a liquid to produce an aerosol that users inhale into their lungs. The use of e-cigarettes is often referred to as vaping. It may also be referenced as “Juuling”, a term coined from the e-cigarette brand Juul.
- The Juul is one of the more popular e-cigarette devices used by teens. It is shaped like a USB drive and uses nicotine liquid cartridges called pods. A single JUUL pod can contain as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes.

What are the health risks of using e-cigarettes?

- E-cigarettes are not just harmless water vapor. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine which is highly addictive and damaging to the developing adolescent brain. Use of nicotine under the age of 25 can harm the parts of the brain responsible for memory, attention and learning. Even when the liquid used in e-cigarettes doesn’t contain nicotine, it still contains other harmful ingredients like heavy metals, flavoring that can be linked to lung disease, ultrafine particles and cancer-causing chemicals that can be inhaled deep into the lungs.
- Vaping can lead to mouth and throat irritation, worsening asthma, chest pain, nausea/upset stomach and nicotine addiction.
- Studies are showing that youth who begin using e-cigarettes as teenagers are more likely to take up smoking than those who don’t use e-cigarettes.

Aside from the use of e-cigarettes to vape nicotine and other flavorings, there has also been an increasing trend amongst youth to use e-cigarette vaporizers for other substances including liquid THC (the main psychoactive substance found in marijuana) and marijuana wax. Because of the highly concentrated levels of THC in both the liquid and wax form of marijuana, the substances produce a more powerful and dangerous high. While a marijuana cigarette can contain up to 18% THC, the liquid or wax form can contain up to 80% THC. This higher potency

high can leave damaging effects on teen brain development and can increase the likelihood of addiction. Aside from the health risks, vaping marijuana can be easier for teens to hide. Vaping THC does not produce the characteristic smell that results when marijuana is smoked through a joint or pipe and most e-cigarettes can be concealed in the palm of the hand.

Education and awareness surrounding the latest teen trends in youth e-cigarette use is an important step in prevention and intervention. SCIP is partnering with Lincoln Public Schools, Bryan Independence Center and Region V Systems in an effort to provide a community awareness event surrounding the use of e-cigarettes. Please join us on October 24 to learn more. For educators, families and community members who are not in the Lincoln/Lancaster County area, this event will be recorded and uploaded to our SCIP website at www.scipnebraska.com within a couple of weeks of the event. LPS will also be providing this event live via Facebook.

October 24, 2019- Let's Talk: Youth Vaping & Marijuana Use
Lincoln Southeast High School (Commons Area)
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Rebekah Willoughby, a Public Health Educator with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department and Deputy Jeremy Schwarz, a Licensed Drug Recognition Expert with the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office, will discuss:

- The prevalence of youth vaping and marijuana use
- The effects of these substances on the developing youth brain
- Physical health effects of vaping and marijuana use and signs of use
- The role of marketing in vaping and various products that youth are using
- Legal aspects
- How to engage in conversations with youth about vaping and marijuana
- Resources to further address prevention and early intervention of use

Please contact Abbe Edgecombe, SCIP Coordinator for Lincoln-Lancaster County, for questions or additional information: (402) 327-6841 or aedgecombe@lmep.com

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); Tobacco Free Lancaster County