

The growing threat of vaping

Cigarette smoking continues to decline among pre-teens and teenagers according to a survey from Monitoring the Future. But the number of young people who are vaping or smoking e-cigarettes has increased. This underscores the importance of greater education for youngsters and their parents about the potential hazards of vaping.

The popularity of vaping is troubling. A study from researchers at the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine that was published in the journal Pediatrics found the rising frequency of e-cigarette use was a significant risk factor for future conventional cigarette use. In the study, researchers surveyed 1,408 Connecticut high school students three times, in autumn 2013, spring 2014 and autumn 2015, on their use of e-cigarettes

and traditional tobacco cigarettes. Teens who used an e-cigarette within a month of participating in the survey in 2013 had seven times greater odds of smoking tobacco cigarettes in 2014. A year later, e-cigarette users were more than three times more likely to smoke tobacco cigarettes.

Perceptions that vaping is less harmful than conventional cigarettes may be a contributing factor to their rising popularity. Also, the widespread availability of these products and their assorted flavors may be appealing to youth.

Vaping ads may be enticing kids, too. Cigarette ads glamorizing smoking have all but vanished. However, vaping ads are becoming more noticeable. According to a National Youth Tobacco Survey, about seven in 10 middle and high school students were exposed to

e-cigarette advertisements in 2014, when the vaping trend began to explode.

Even though e-cigarettes are marketed to be safer than traditional cigarettes because they purportedly contain fewer chemicals and harmless water vapor, some experts say this isn't the case. No federal agency oversaw initial development of the e-cigarette industry, so no standards exist — although this may be changing soon. One Food and Drug Administration review of 18 different e-cigarette cartridges found toxic and carcinogenic chemicals in some but not others. Also, some products that were labeled to be nicotine-free actually did have nicotine.

Many vaping juices contain nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerine, and flavorings. No long-term evidence regarding the safety of

these chemicals when inhaled exists. The American Lung Association says some e-cigarettes use diacetyl, a buttery-flavored chemical once used in food production like popcorn. When inhaled, diacetyl causes bronchiolitis obliterans — more commonly referred to as “popcorn lung.” This is a scarring of the tiny air sacs in the lungs that results in the thickening and narrowing of the airways.

Some teens also replace the e-juice with marijuana and hash oils. These vaporized oils produce little smell, which makes them hard to detect.

Vaping may seem like a harmless trend. But parents and children should be cognizant of the threats that vaping poses to one's overall health.

CRYSTAL DOWELL Family Nurse Practitioner

*We are excited to announce that Crystal Dowell, Family Nurse Practitioner, will now be at the Coryell Health Mills County Clinic full time, taking walk-in and same day appointments. Crystal has been in the nursing field for over 20 years, having earned her Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas- Arlington and her Master's of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) from South University. **Crystal grew up in Goldthwaite and enjoys spending time there with her husband and four children.***



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