



# Electronic Cigarettes & Tobacco 21

*More kids now use electronic cigarettes than regular cigarettes. E-cigarettes provide a relatively new way to deliver the addictive substance nicotine. We have much more to learn about e-cigarettes, and many questions remain about the long-term effects of these products. A 2016 report of the Surgeon General supports prohibiting the sale of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to anyone under 21 to protect young people from the harms of e-cigarettes.*

## **YOUTH USE OF E-CIGARETTES**

E-cigarettes are now the most popular tobacco product used by kids. The 2016 U.S. Surgeon General's Report on e-cigarettes found that, based on the evidence to date, e-cigarette use among U.S. youth and young adults "is now a major public health concern."

- In 2015, 16 percent of high school students were current users of e-cigarettes, compared with 9.3 percent who used regular cigarettes (current use is defined as use in the past 30 days). Since 2011 there has been a more than ten-fold increase in e-cigarette use among high schoolers.
- There is concern that use of e-cigarettes may precede the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products for some kids. According to the Surgeon General's report, e-cigarette use is "strongly associated" with the use of other tobacco products, including cigarettes, by young people.

## **E-CIGARETTES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN TOBACCO 21 LEGISLATION**

Increasing the age of sale is about preventing tobacco use among young people and saving lives. Raising the age will help counter the efforts of the industry to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular use. It will also help keep tobacco products — of all kinds — out of high schools and away from younger kids.

## **HEALTH EFFECTS OF E-CIGARETTES**

While we do not know the long term effects of e-cigarette use, it is clear, as the Surgeon General has stated, that "E-cigarette aerosol is not harmless. It can contain harmful and potentially harmful constituents, including nicotine."

- **Nicotine is a highly addictive drug** that can have lasting damaging effects on adolescent brain development and has been linked to a variety of adverse health outcomes for the developing fetus. Nicotine also impacts the cardiovascular system. The Surgeon General concluded, “The use of products containing nicotine in any form among youth, including in e-cigarettes, is unsafe.”
- The brain is the last organ in the human body to develop fully, with brain development continuing **until the early to mid-20s**. Nicotine exposure during periods of significant brain development, such as adolescence, can disrupt the growth of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction.

### **E-CIGARETTES MARKETING AND FLAVORS AIMED AT YOUTH**

E-cigarettes are marketed to kids in many of the same ways cigarettes used to be — through slick ads, celebrity endorsements and sponsorships, and especially sweet and candy flavors.

- E-cigarettes are available in more than 7,000 thousand flavors, including many kid-friendly ones that seem like they belong in a candy store or ice cream parlor — like gummy bear, cotton candy, peanut butter cup, cookies ‘n cream and Pop Rocks.
- A government study found that 81 percent of kids who have ever tried e-cigarettes started with a flavored e-cigarette, and more than 8 out of 10 current youth e-cigarette users said they used the products “because they come in flavors I like.”

### **DO E-CIGARETTES HELP PEOPLE QUIT SMOKING?**

E-cigarettes could benefit public health if they help significantly reduce the number of people who use regular cigarettes. However, public health authorities in the U.S. have found that there is not enough evidence to recommend e-cigarettes for tobacco cessation.

- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force said “the current evidence is insufficient to recommend electronic nicotine delivery systems for tobacco cessation.”
- Researchers from the CDC stated, “There is currently no conclusive scientific evidence that e-cigarettes promote long-term cessation, and e-cigarettes are not included as a recommended smoking cessation method by the U.S. Public Health Service.”

### **NO IMPACT ON THOSE 21 AND OLDER**

While the jury is still out on the long-term safety or harms of e-cigarettes, Tobacco 21 legislation has no impact on those 21 and older being able to legally purchase e-cigarettes. This legislation is aimed at keeping all tobacco products out of the hands of young people under the age of 21. No one under 21 should be using any tobacco product including e-cigarettes.

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Sources: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “Electronic Cigarettes: An Overview of Key Issues,” <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0379.pdf>. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “Increasing the Minimum Legal Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21,” <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0376.pdf>. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General,” Factsheet, [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016\\_SGR\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Fact_Sheet_508.pdf).