

Vaping: gateway to cigarettes?

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PITTSBURGH, Pa. (Ivanhoe Newswire) — Electronic cigarettes have been described as products that let users wean themselves from tobacco, but could the opposite be true? New research suggests that teens and young adults who never smoked cigarettes are starting on the e-cigarettes and then moving to traditional smokes.

As many as one in four teens have tried e-cigarettes, inhaling a combination of flavored liquid and nicotine. It's called vaping.

But researchers wonder at what cost to health? Brian Primack, MD, PhD, is the director of the Center for Research on Media, Technology and Health at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

"Just like it used to be they were smoking in the bathroom stalls, they are vaping in bathrooms or after school," Dr. Primack told Ivanhoe.

Dr. Primack and his colleagues studied 2,000 teens and young adults starting at age 18. Over a period of 18 months, they found that 50 percent of the young adults who vaped went on to smoke tobacco cigarettes.

"This is very concerning because we are talking about a big population of people who would probably not move on to start smoking cigarettes," Dr. Primack explained.

Dr. Primack said the results suggest that e-cigarettes could be a gateway to tobacco, in addition to other health risks like lung disease and even cancer. Researchers say it's important for parents to become familiar with vaping terms and brands, like Juul, Vuse and MarkTen. Talk to kids about potential health risks starting in elementary school; some of the liquids may be appealing to kids.

"It's flavored; chocolate, mango, strawberry. The kinds of things kids are used to having in their bubble tea," Dr. Primack detailed.

An earlier study of younger teens and adults showed that 38 percent of e-cigarette users went on to smoke tobacco.

Dr. Primack said more research is necessary to determine why e-cigarettes may increase a person's risk of using tobacco. He says it's possibly, because among other things, vaping mimics the behavior of smoking traditional cigarettes.

Contributors to this news report include: Cyndy McGrath, Supervising and Field Producer; Milvionne Chery, Assistant Producer; Roque Correa, Editor; Kirk Manson, Videographer.

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