



Vaping: Today's Cigarette

by Dana Viox, BSN RN

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Sneaking a cigarette into the school's bathroom? Not today's teens. They have taken to vaping, an alternative to smoking that is so discreet they can do it without leaving the classroom.

Vaping devices, commonly called e-cigarettes, are difficult to detect for school faculty and staff. Students get away with it in the hallways, bathrooms, classrooms, and some say they even exhale into their shirts.

Companies have made these vape tools and e-cigarettes appear like tech devices - the latest brand being Juul, which is shaped like a USB drive and is difficult for adults to detect.

Another concern is that these companies are marketing their products by enticing young people with labels like fruits, candy, nicotine salt juice, juice box, fruit medley, and cool cucumber.

Teens do not realize that vaping is illegal for those under 18 and it is dangerous. E-cigarettes do not produce tobacco smoke, but rather an aerosol, often mistaken for water vapor, that actually consists of fine particles.

These particles contain varying amounts of nicotine, benzene (used in gasoline and other fuels, glue), ethylene glycol (chemical used in anti-freeze), propylene glycol – FDA warns that this is generally safe, but continued exposure can cause throat and airway irritation and exacerbate asthma, toluene (an industrial solvent) - and formaldehyde (used to preserve dead bodies).

In 2015, 1 in 6 high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the past month. That number has only gone higher since and is sparking major concerns among parents and school leaders.

So, how can parents get ahead of these companies promoting to their young, impressionable kids:

First, educate yourself about it. Nicotine is used in almost all of these products. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug and contains highly carcinogenic toxins in the byproducts.

The CDC recommends you start the conversation – find the right moment to open up the discussion. Be blunt and ask if they've ever experimented with vaping or e-cigarettes.

Then, if they come clean or not, inform them that nicotine in these devices is still harmful and addictive and could cause health problems.

Answer their questions - Check out the surgeon general's website for more information.

Keep the conversation going – text and share information with your teens. Many parents find that texting is a great way to reach their teens.

Resources: Department of Health & Human Services, U.S. Surgeon General & The CDC.



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