

## ADDRESSING THE VAPING TREND AMONG TEENAGERS

In today's society, countless concerns arise regarding youths' mental and physical health. With each generation, new harmful trends pop up among teen groups. Nowadays, most of these trends are strongly influenced by the media, however, multiple other factors contribute to leading young individuals to participate in detrimental activities.

### ALTERNATIVE TO SMOKING – THE RISING ISSUE OF VAPING IN SCHOOLS

Vaping or, in other words, the use of E-cigarettes, is one of the more common harmful activities, spiking in popularity among adolescents. This issue has been a growing concern in schools, with many underage students participating in vaping during break times or classes. This may not be noticeable, unlike smoking cigarettes, which leaves a lingering tobacco smell on the uniform, or the school bathroom. It is quite the opposite. E-liquid, which is used in E-cigarettes, has an indistinct sweet scent, such as different fruits or berries. Since the smell is dull, it wears out after a few minutes or so. "Even in a poorly ventilated area with windows shut, any smells from vaping should be gone in only ten minutes or so, instead of lasting around for hours like smoking" one TVape article states. Therefore, most of the time school personnel are unable to distinguish or notice the smell in time. Furthermore, the fruity taste is incredibly appealing to the young demographic. Inhaling fresh juicy vapor may even seem healthier than the unappetizing cigarette smoke.

### WHAT LEADS TO TAKING UP E-CIGARETTES AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE?

**Marketing strategies:** Apart from causing a potential nicotine addiction, not many other disclosures of consuming E-cigarettes are visibly addressed. Vaping, just like smoking, puts people's health at risk of lung and heart diseases, but this information is usually swept under the rug by colorful and fetching marketing, instead of putting graphic images of possible long-term effects with clear disclaimers like cigarette companies do. E-liquid brands have a past for marketing their products to look like candy, which is extremely appealing to kids and teens. Luckily, in 2018, the FDA took action to take such products with candy imagery and names off the shelves, however, the colorful packaging remains to this day.

**Peer pressure:** The teenage years are all about fitting in with others. This may lead to following others' trail into harmful trends and actions, in this case – vaping. When people around you show examples of gathering into groups to vape and chat, it feels tempting to

join in and not feel like an outcast. This is quite a common occurrence in schools. A bond can be easily developed by accepting an E-cigarette from a complete stranger, let alone a friend group which is more important than a stranger. On top of that, a stranger can turn into a so-called smoke buddy, a person who shares the same habit of smoking or vaping, who you meet now and then to share a smoke with. As much as this form of friendship may deceive one into believing that there is a genuine connection, in most cases all ties are cut off when one quits the addiction.

**Easy access:** Like other harmful substances such as tobacco or alcohol, underage individuals can obtain E-cigarettes through an adult friend. Many 15-17-year-olds have friends of 18+ age, whom they can rely on as providers for E-cigarettes, or E-liquids, as in most European countries the legal age for purchasing nicotine products is 18. But if one does not have any adult friends, that is not an obstacle. Nowadays multiple adults supply minors with E-cigarettes for a slightly higher price than the market's, benefiting both sides and making a profit. Underage nicotine consumers can find supplier's contacts through social media, or by asking a friend. However, this practice is highly illegal and may lead to serious consequences.

#### PREVENTING EARLY ADDICTION FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

In conclusion, resolving the vaping issue among adolescents requires recognition and attention from parents, educators, and school systems before this becomes a major problem. Prevention programs should be introduced in schools early to raise awareness and properly inform students about the potential harm of E-cigarettes. The sooner we take action, the more youth's health is secured in the future.

#### REFERENCES

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Erika, IB 2, Siauliai. Lithuania