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AAP News

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E-cigarettes easy to buy, can hook kids on nicotine

1. [Trisha Koriath](#), Staff Writer

Parents may try electronic cigarettes to help them quit smoking. Teens may try them because they think they're safer than regular cigarettes. One electronic cigarette, however, can have as much nicotine as a whole pack of cigarettes. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has found cancer-causing chemicals in electronic cigarettes.



Electronic cigarettes are advertised as a way to help smokers quit. Also known as e-cigarettes or e-cigs, they are sold in many colors, shapes, sizes and flavors, such as vanilla, chocolate and peach schnapps. The devices have a battery, vaporizer and cartridge that make a mist that is inhaled. Smoking e-cigarettes is known as “vaping.”

E-cig usage has doubled among middle and high school students. A survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that about one in 10 high school students admitted using an e-cigarette.

E-cigs are not regulated or approved by the FDA and do not have to follow the same rules as other nicotine products. This means that the amount of nicotine and other harmful ingredients in each cartridge is not always the same. In addition, it's easy for kids to buy e-cigs. More than half of states allow kids of any age to purchase e-cigarettes, and they're easy to get online and in mall booths.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges parents to talk with their kids about the dangers of e-cigarettes. Most cartridges have 20 milligrams of nicotine, and a dose of as little as 10 milligrams of nicotine can be fatal for a child. In addition, children can easily become hooked on the nicotine.

Parents who think their child may be using e-cigarettes should watch for signs of nicotine addiction, according to the AAP. This includes feeling nervous, craving e-cigarettes and not being able to quit. Parents who are trying to quit smoking should avoid using e-cigarettes and try other options that are approved by the FDA, such as nicotine patches or gum.

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