



September 11, 2019

Dear Superintendent:

Let me begin by thanking you for your shared commitment to our youth. Because of the skyrocketing popularity and use of vaping products among our children, I want to share some important educational information and links to resources for school administrators, teachers, parents, and students about the dangers of e-cigarette use and vaping by youth, as well as information about how to obtain free cessation counseling.

As of now, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has reported 10 confirmed cases of severe pulmonary illness that's likely due to vaping, while we are investigating 14 other reports of illness. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is aware of 450 possible cases in 33 states and is reporting that there have been at least two deaths, while the media has reported five deaths.

The unprecedented increase in vaping by youth and young adults, in particular -- 78 percent increase in reported use between 2017 and 2018 for high school students and 48 percent increase for middle school students -- has prompted the U.S. Surgeon General to issue a public health advisory<sup>1</sup>, which is an action taken only four times in the last 20 years. As you know, this is a serious public health concern, especially among our children and young adults, and the current investigation into vaping-related severe respiratory illnesses and deaths is an additional warning that we must be vigilant in protecting our youth.

Because vaping products contain nicotine, the ODH and many other state and federal agencies, including the CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), consider e-cigarettes to be non-combustible tobacco products. They are particularly harmful to youth and young adults who may more easily develop a nicotine addiction because their brains are still developing.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, there is substantial evidence to suggest that when youth are introduced to electronic vapor products, they are more likely to try traditional tobacco products than if they never tried electronic vapor products.<sup>3</sup> This increase in youth use is halting the progress made over the past decade to prevent new life-long addictions to tobacco.

The Ohio Department of Health has been following the use of electronic vapor products, including JUUL and JUUL-related products, by youth and has received many requests for information about these products from school districts and youth agencies. JUUL products are relatively new but have already captured nearly 70 percent of the e-cigarette market and have surpassed traditional cigarettes as the most used tobacco product by youth<sup>5</sup>. We strongly encourage you to include e-cigarettes in your tobacco-free school policy. We also encourage schools to list prohibited products by name (e.g., JUUL, Blu, VUSE, etc.), as we are noticing

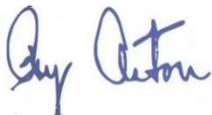
students may not consider JUUL or other e-cigarettes to be tobacco products. Strong tobacco-free policies have been shown to decrease youth initiation of tobacco use and decrease the amount of tobacco used for those who are using, which also additionally protects people from exposure to secondhand smoke.

JUULs, in particular, closely resemble USB drives and emit little to no detectable vapor or odor so use may go undetected even in classrooms. Additionally, ODH has learned that the manufacturer of JUUL products, JUUL Labs, previously contacted schools around the country seeking their participation in a prevention program designed by the e-cigarette manufacturer. However, be aware that there are many varieties of vaping products. Even though JUUL may be the most popular, it is not the only kind of vaping device. Further, there is a long history of the tobacco industry sponsoring youth prevention programming that ultimately undermined evidence-based tobacco control efforts.<sup>4</sup> JUUL has discontinued their program, but the ODH recommends that school districts reject any offer made by tobacco or e-cigarette companies to educate students, provide resources, or sponsor events.

Ohio's new law prohibiting sale of tobacco products to people under the age of 21 (T21), which will take effect October 17, 2019, will also assist communities in preventing youth from accessing and using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and other vaping products. We are developing additional resources related to the implementation of T21 and vaping, so please stay alert, as we will be sharing additional information and resources with you as we work to solve this difficult problem together.

If you have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or if you would like additional resources on tobacco prevention or maintaining a tobacco-free school environment, please contact the Ohio Department of Health K-12 School District Public Health Consultant, Taylor Kachmarik, at 614-644-7975 or email [tobaccoprevention@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:tobaccoprevention@odh.ohio.gov). Thank you so much for your commitment to keeping our children and youth healthy.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Acton".

Amy Acton, MD, MPH  
Director  
Ohio Department of Health

P.S. Because of the concentration of the nicotine in the e-liquid, there has been an increase in nicotine poisoning cases. When Governor DeWine was a U.S. Senator, he helped create the National Poison Help Hotline. If you suspect nicotine poisoning call 1-800-222-1222 for assistance.

## Resources on Electronic Cigarettes

### **Youth Cessation Options (All Free of Charge)**

- My Life, My Quit (Ohio Tobacco Quit Line). This program combines best practices for youth tobacco cessation adapted to include vaping and new ways to reach a coach using live text messaging or online chat. The program includes educational materials designed for teens created with youth input and through discussion with subject matter experts and community stakeholders. To enroll, text or call 1-855-891-9989 or visit [mylifemyquit.com](http://mylifemyquit.com)
- This Is Quitting (Truth Initiative). This is Quitting is a free text message program created with input from teens, college students, and young adults who have attempted to, or successfully quit, e-cigarettes. The program is tailored by age group to give appropriate recommendations about quitting and also serves as a resource for parents looking to help their children who now vape. Youth and young adults can access the new e-cigarette quit program by texting "DITCHJUUL" to 88709. Parents and other adults looking to help young people quit should text "QUIT" to 202-899-7550. <https://www.thetruth.com/articles/hot-topic/quit-vaping>
- Ohio Tobacco Quitline. Provides cessation services to youth and to young adults. [1-800-QUIT-NOW](http://1-800-QUIT-NOW), [1-800-784-8669](http://1-800-784-8669) (Available free of charge for adults over 18, as well – teachers, parents)

### **Resources for Pediatricians and Family Physicians**

- JUULing: What Pediatricians and Families Need to Know (American Academy of Pediatrics). <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/AAP-JUUL-Factsheet.pdf>
- E-Cigarette factsheet for physicians (American Academy of Pediatrics). <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/5AsENDSfactsheet.pdf>
- Clinical Action Communication Regarding Unexplained Vaping-Associated Pulmonary Illness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Please report any potential case to your local health department. <https://emergency.cdc.gov/newsletters/coca/081619.htm>

### **Youth Prevention Programs for Educators**

- Know the Risks: A Youth Guide to E-Cigarettes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). This presentation is intended to inform youth about e-cigarettes. Anyone can deliver this presentation using the resources available on the webpage. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/youth-guide-to-e-cigarettes-presentation.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/youth-guide-to-e-cigarettes-presentation.html)
- CATCH My Breath Youth E-cigarette Prevention Program (CATCH Global Foundation): CATCH My Breath™ is a youth e-cigarette, vape, JUUL, and vape prevention program specific to grades 5-12. <https://catchinfo.org/modules/e-cigarettes/>
- The Tobacco Prevention Toolkit (Stanford University) is an educational resource that can be adapted to fit the individual needs of educators and students in all types of settings, including elementary, middle and high schools; community-based organizations; and health-related agencies. <http://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/E-Cigs/ECigUnit6.html>
  - More information about Stanford Medicine's Prevention Toolkit is available at: [https://office365stanford-my.sharepoint.com/:p/g/personal/rceb3\\_stanford\\_edu/EaOOeNHvKp1GkTXekf16DZQBC-5bdf6BoUtsQyt2tLcu7Q](https://office365stanford-my.sharepoint.com/:p/g/personal/rceb3_stanford_edu/EaOOeNHvKp1GkTXekf16DZQBC-5bdf6BoUtsQyt2tLcu7Q)

## Resources for Parents

- JUUL and Youth: Rising E-Cigarette Popularity (Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids). An informative document about JUUL products: <https://youthengagementalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/JUUL-Fact-Sheet-2-5-18.pdf>
- Know the Risks E-Cigarettes & Young People (U.S. Surgeon General). A tip sheet for parents to talk with teens about e-cigarettes. [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR\\_ECig\\_ParentTipSheet\\_508.pdf](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_ECig_ParentTipSheet_508.pdf)

## Resources for Students and Young Adults

- Know the Risks: E-cigarettes and Young People (U.S. Surgeon General). [https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/?s\\_cid=bb-osh-sgr2016-001](https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/?s_cid=bb-osh-sgr2016-001)
- Concerns Explode Over New Health Risks of Vaping (Science News for Students). <https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/concerns-explode-over-new-health-risks-vaping>
- Electronic Cigarettes: What's the Bottom Line (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)? [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/pdfs/Electronic-Cigarettes-Infographic-508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/pdfs/Electronic-Cigarettes-Infographic-508.pdf)

## Childhood Poisoning Prevention

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, one teaspoon of liquid nicotine can be fatal in 26-pound child. Liquid nicotine bottles sold in the U.S. average six teaspoons. Poison control centers began receiving calls about e-cigarettes and liquid nicotine products in 2011, which coincides with the initial period where these products reached the U.S. market. Calls increased by 160% between 2013 (1,540) and 2014 (4,011). An average of 3,060 annual calls were recorded between 2015 and 2018. Data from American Association of Poison Control Centers.

<https://www.aapcc.org/track/ecigarettes-liquid-nicotine>

- E-Cigarettes and Young Children: The Dangers of Liquid Nicotine Exposure (American Academy of Pediatrics). [https://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/04/25/e-cigarettes-and-young-children-the-dangers-of-liquid-nicotine-exposure-pediatrics-4-25-18?utm\\_source=TrendMD&utm\\_medium=TrendMD&utm\\_campaign=AAPNews\\_TrendMD\\_0](https://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/04/25/e-cigarettes-and-young-children-the-dangers-of-liquid-nicotine-exposure-pediatrics-4-25-18?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=TrendMD&utm_campaign=AAPNews_TrendMD_0)
- Studies Look at Dangers of E-Cigarettes; AAP Continues Push for Regulations (American Academy of Pediatrics). [https://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/04/23/ecigarettes042318?utm\\_source=TrendMD&utm\\_medium=TrendMD&utm\\_campaign=AAPNews\\_TrendMD\\_0](https://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/04/23/ecigarettes042318?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=TrendMD&utm_campaign=AAPNews_TrendMD_0)
- E-Cigarettes Rising Cause of Nicotine Poisoning in Children (Medscape). [https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/863046?src=trendmd\\_pilot](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/863046?src=trendmd_pilot)

## General Research and Information

- Surgeon General's Advisory on E-Cigarette Use Among Youth (Surgeon General). U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, MD, MPH, issued a rare public health advisory in response to the unprecedented spike in e-cigarette use among youth. <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/surgeon-generals-advisory-on-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-2018.pdf>
- Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine).
  - Full Report: <http://nationalacademies.org/ecighealtheffects>

- Conclusions by level of evidence:  
<https://www.nap.edu/resource/24952/012318ecigaretteConclusionsbyEvidence.pdf>
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1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Surgeon General's Calls to Action. 2018. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2018/12/18/surgeon-general-releases-advisory-e-cigarette-epidemic-among-youth.html>
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016, p. 6. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/e-cigarettes/pdfs/2016\\_sgr\\_entire\\_report\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/e-cigarettes/pdfs/2016_sgr_entire_report_508.pdf)
3. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. Public health consequences of e-cigarettes. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Conclusion 16-1. <https://www.nap.edu/resource/24952/012318ecigaretteConclusionsbyEvidence.pdf>
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. Printed with corrections, January 2014, p.797. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179276/pdf/Bookshelf\\_NBK179276.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179276/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK179276.pdf)
5. Ohio Youth Tobacco Survey, 2014, 2016.