E-Cigarettes: A Dangerous Trend

Vaping devices are becoming more popular, putting teens at risk.

FEWER TEENS ARE SMOKING cigarettes than ever before. But many have begun using electronic cigarettes. In a recent study, nearly a third of 12th graders reported using vaping devices within the past year.

Health officials are concerned. E-cigarettes are believed to be safer than tobacco, but scientists know little about their risks. Plus, almost all e-cigarettes contain nicotine, the same highly addictive chemical found in tobacco cigarettes.

**What Are E-Cigarettes?**

E-cigarettes are also called e-vaporizors or vape pens. These battery-operated devices often include cartridges that contain liquid chemicals. When someone puffs on the device, the liquid is heated into a vapor that is inhaled. This is called “vaping.”

**Vapor vs. Smoke**

Many teens don’t think vaping is harmful. This could be because e-cigarettes produce vapor instead of harsh smoke like tobacco cigarettes do. Some even have candy-like flavors.

At one time, people didn’t know the dangers of tobacco cigarettes. Now we know that tobacco smoke is responsible for 480,000 U.S. deaths each year.

That’s why health officials fear what we don’t know yet about vaping. E-cigarettes have only existed for about 15 years. Scientists haven’t determined all of their effects. We do know that some e-cigarette vapor contains cancer-causing substances and other toxic materials.

**It’s Just as Addictive**

Like tobacco, most e-cigarettes contain nicotine. In fact, one cartridge can contain as much nicotine as a whole pack of tobacco cigarettes!

People who use nicotine have a high chance of developing an addiction. This
is especially true for teens. Studies have shown that teens who use nicotine may have a greater chance of becoming addicted to other drugs too.

For adults who already smoke, switching from tobacco to e-cigarettes is the safer option. But e-cigarettes are not safe for nonsmokers or teens. E-cigarettes can also lead teens to use tobacco cigarettes.

**What’s Next?**

In most states, it is illegal to sell e-cigarettes to people under the age of 18. Officials are cracking down on retailers and companies who sell and market e-cigarettes to teens.

Scientists are continuing to study the health effects of e-cigarettes. But one thing is clear: Using e-cigarettes is not worth the risk.