

# Jasper School District Wellness Newsletter

May 2014

## E-Cigarettes Surging in Popularity and Hazards

E-cigarettes are transforming the national debate over tobacco smoking, and that conversation has been extended to marijuana smoking, as well. Billed as a safer, cleaner way to get a nicotine fix, electronic cigarettes are surging in popularity and more teens are trying these products. The 2012 National Youth Tobacco Survey shows that recent e-cigarette use nearly doubled in one year among U.S. high school students, rising from 1.5% in 2011 to 2.8% smoking them in 2012, with trends continuing to increase.

Doctors and researchers say these smoking substitutes are far from harmless — especially to children. Anyone who uses (or "vapes") an e-cigarette is still putting harmful and addictive nicotine into his or her system. Additionally, the liquid nicotine used in the devices, which comes in flavors such as bubblegum and cola, is being blamed for a growing number of poisonings across the nation.

This liquid form of nicotine in e-cigarettes is extracted from tobacco, with an addition of flavorings, colorings and assorted chemicals. Like e-cigarettes, e-liquids are not regulated by federal authorities. Toxicologists warn that e-liquids pose a significant health risk, particularly to children, who may be drawn to their neon-bright colors and fragrant flavorings like cherry, chocolate and bubble gum.

Nationwide, there has been a surge in the number of calls to poison control centers. The number of cases linked to e-liquids jumped to 1,351 in 2013, a 300 percent increase from 2012, and the number is on pace to double this year, according to information from the National Poison Control Data System.

Symptoms of nicotine poisoning include hyperactivity, flushing, sweating, headache, dizziness, rapid heart rate, vomiting and diarrhea. Even small amounts on a child's skin can cause irritation and a burning sensation. In very severe cases, a child's heart rate and blood pressure may drop dangerously low, resulting in a coma or even death.

### Keeping Kids From Using Tobacco

Because nicotine is so addictive, the best way to avoid the health problems it can cause is to never start smoking or vaping. While kids and teens often don't consider how their current behaviors can affect their future health, it's important to discuss them. Also focus on the immediate downsides, like less money to spend on other pursuits.

If your teen smokes and wants to quit, e-cigarettes aren't the way to go. Using an e-

cigarette mimics the experience of smoking regular cigarettes more closely than other quitting options. Instead, encourage your teen to try nicotine gum or the nicotine patch, which will help prevent withdrawal symptoms.

Whether your teen uses old-school smokes or trendy new e-cigarettes, the tips for kicking the habit are the same:

**A plan is important.** Your teen should set a date to begin the quitting process. Then, even a modest goal — like using one less e-cigarette each day for a week — will work.

**Stay busy.** Distractions like exercise or doing something that involves using the hands (art, music, knitting, etc.) can help an urge to smoke or vape pass.

**Overcome cravings.** When your teens craves a cigarette or e-cigarette, encourage him or her to think "wait" rather than "no," then do something to distract from the craving. Chances are, the urge will pass, and that means one less cigarette.

**Get support.** Encouragement from you and other family members when your teen really wants a cigarette is important. Joining an online or in-person support group can help, too.

In addition to tobacco products, now thanks to Act 1099, e-cigarettes are prohibited on school campuses or school sponsored events.

Resources:

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.stampoutsmoking.com](http://www.stampoutsmoking.com)

[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)