Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

How E-Cigarettes May Lead Youth to Cigarette Smoking in 200 Words

Family & Community Health

Date Posted:

Jul 17, 2017

Studies of U.S. youth who use e-cigarettes identify remarkably consistent findings: adolescents and young adults who use e-cigarettes, compared to those that do not, are at higher risk of transitioning to traditional cigarettes. This is the conclusion of seven separate, well-designed, long-term follow-up studies, analyzed within a recent *JAMA Pediatrics* meta-analysis.

These findings raise significant concern that e-cigarettes have the potential to addict a new generation to nicotine and traditional tobacco products, slowing or reversing the decline in adolescent cigarette smoking that has occurred over the past two decades. Moreover, adolescents who use e-cigarettes appear to have fewer social and behavioral risk factors than conventional cigarette users, meaning that adolescents previously at low-risk for using cigarettes could find themselves drawn to traditional tobacco products through their e-cigarette use.

The role, if any, of these tobacco products in helping adult smokers quit requires rigorous scientific inquiry and remains unproven and unclear. Regardless, there are well-defined, scientifically sound steps needed for e-cigarette regulation to protect the health of our children, adolescents and young adults. As a pediatrician, the importance of the FDA and state and local agencies taking action to educate youth, parents and families about the harms of these products, deter youth use of e-cigarettes, and prevent the transition from e-cigarettes to traditional cigarettes can't be understated.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Communications Manager Lauren Walens.

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