

Young parents who use e-cigarettes believe devices are safer for those around them

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Many young parents are using electronic cigarettes, and despite any evidence for safety, the vast majority of young adults who have used the devices believe they are less harmful than regular cigarettes, according to research to be presented Sunday, May 4, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid nicotine solution. The user inhales the vapor created and ingests the nicotine. Some [e-cigarettes](#) are flavored, and some have been found to contain toxic chemicals.

E-cigarettes, which have been sold in the United States since 2007, are marketed as an option to help smokers kick the habit. They also are portrayed as sexy, fun devices for young adults.

To determine how often and why young adults use e-cigarettes, researchers surveyed a random sample of 3,253 adults in September 2013. Eighty-eight percent completed the survey. Eight percent were young adults ages 18-24 years old, and 22 percent were parents.

Participants were asked if they had heard of [electronic cigarettes](#) and if they had ever tried them. They also were asked if they currently smoke cigarettes or if they had smoked in the past.

Results showed that 13 percent of parents had tried electronic cigarettes,

and 6 percent reported using the devices in the past 30 days. In addition, 45 percent of parents who had tried electronic cigarettes and 49 percent who reported using them in the past 30 days had never smoked regular cigarettes, or were former smokers.

Parents reported several reasons for using electronic cigarettes: 81 percent said e-cigarettes might be less harmful than cigarettes to people around them; 76 percent said e-cigarettes are more acceptable to non-tobacco users; and 72 percent said they could use the devices in places where [smoking cigarettes](#) isn't allowed.

All [young adults](#) who reported using e-cigarettes said they used devices that contained menthol or fruit flavor compared to 65 percent of adults ages 25 and older. Young adults also were less likely than older adults to use e-cigarettes to help them quit smoking (7 percent vs. 58 percent).

"This study has two alarming findings," said lead author Robert C. McMillen, PhD, associate professor, Social Science Research Center, and coordinator, Tobacco Control Unit, Department of Psychology, Mississippi State University. "First, the risks of e-cigarette use and exposure to vapor are unknown, yet many parents report using these electronic cigarettes to reduce harm to others. Second, half of current users are nonsmokers, suggesting that unlike tobacco harm-reduction products, e-cigarettes contribute to primary nicotine addiction and to renormalization of smoking behaviors."

More information: Dr. McMillen, who also is a principal investigator with the American Academy of Pediatrics' Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence, will present "Electronic Cigarette Use Among Young Adults" and "Use of Electronic Cigarettes Among Parents" at 4:15 p.m. Sunday, May 4. To view the study abstracts, go to [www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view ... 14L1_2951.660&terms=](http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...14L1_2951.660&terms=) and [www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view ... 14L1_2951.661&terms=](http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...14L1_2951.661&terms=)

A poster on the health effects of e-cigarette vapor on developing lungs will also be presented Sunday, May 4. To see the abstract, "Effects of E-cigarette Exposure on Early Postnatal Alveolar Development in Neonatal Mice," go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...14L1_2957.793&terms=

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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