

Teen use of e-cigarettes, hookahs way up: survey

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Bright spot in U.S. government report is that fewer kids are smoking cigarettes.

(HealthDay)—Although fewer American children are smoking cigarettes, the use of controversial e-cigarettes has more than doubled in just three years, a federal survey reports.

It's something of a good news/bad news situation, Catherine Corey, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, said in an agency news release.

"While we're glad to see cigarette smoking decreasing in middle and [high school](#) youth, the increase in the use of e-cigarettes and hookahs [water pipes] undermines progress in reducing tobacco use among kids," she said.

The 2014 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that 25 percent of high school students had used a tobacco product in the past month. The

survey also found that one in 13 kids in middle school had admitted to using a tobacco product in the past month.

Between 2011 and 2014, the percentage of children [smoking cigarettes](#) fell significantly from 16 percent to 9 percent. During this same time period, however, hookah use among [high school students](#) doubled.

E-cigarettes were even more popular. Of the 4.6 million young people who admitted to using tobacco, 2.4 million used e-cigarettes. This is the first time e-cigarette use exceeded the use of every other tobacco product, the survey revealed.

Even more alarming, 2.2 million teens said they had used more than one tobacco product during the past month, the survey found.

"One thing the study confirms for us is that the tobacco product landscape has changed dramatically. Middle and high school kids are using novel products like e-cigarettes and hookahs in unprecedented numbers, and many are using more than one kind of tobacco product," Benjamin Apelberg, branch chief of epidemiology at FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, said in the news release.

Nicotine in any form is dangerous and highly addictive for all children—regardless of their age. That includes e-cigarettes, hookahs, cigarettes or cigars, the researchers cautioned. Young brains are still developing, and the teenage years are a particularly critical time of development, the researchers added.

Exposure to nicotine early in life increases the risk for addiction. Tobacco use can also be harmful because of users' exposure to an array of other toxic chemicals in these products, the researchers said.

"Youth should not use tobacco in any form," Apelberg advised.

The FDA already has regulatory authority over cigarettes, [cigarette tobacco](#), roll-your-own tobacco and [smokeless tobacco](#). It is working to expand its reach to include e-cigarettes, cigars and hookahs. An FDA proposal also recommends a minimum age of 18 years for buying tobacco products.

"These latest findings serve to strengthen existing scientific evidence that novel [tobacco products](#) like e-cigarettes and hookah have great appeal to youth, and that comprehensive youth prevention efforts that focus on reducing all forms of [tobacco](#) use are needed," said Corey.

The survey findings were published recently in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides more information on [e-cigarettes](#).

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