

Tiny juul device getting U.S. teens hooked on vaping

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(HealthDay)—Tiny e-cigarette devices that look like USB drives are

making it tough for parents and educators to keep their kids from vaping.

And these devices are producing a new generation of nicotine-addicted Americans, experts say.

"The way these products are able to be used without any sort of detection from adults is very much consistent with something that would appeal to a kid," said Erika Sward, the American Lung Association's assistant vice president of national advocacy.

The most well-known of these devices is the Juul, an [e-cigarette](#) that closely resembles a USB drive. In fact, it charges by being inserted into a computer's USB port, furthering the illusion, Sward noted.

The device produces vapor in a variety of fruit and mint flavors, and is so well-known that students have turned Juul into a verb, Sward added.

"They may not even call it vaping. They will refer to it as Juuling," Sward said. "As a result, some of the information being used for youth education about e-cigarette use isn't specific enough to deal with Juul."

The Juul is so popular that many kids don't even realize that it is an e-cigarette loaded with nicotine, she said.

But Juul Labs, the San Francisco company that makes the device, contends that it is only intended for adults who want to quit smoking.

"We do not want kids using our products," Ashley Gould, Juul's chief administrative officer, told *The New York Times*. "Our product is not only not for kids, it's not for non-nicotine users."

But Sean Christiansen, a Maryland high school student, told his state's

senate in February that his age group is being targeted by e-cigarette makers.

"If you were to go to social media, there are constantly videos and pictures of [high schoolers](#) doing 'vape tricks,' " Christiansen, 14, testified. "These are designed to increase the number of high schoolers who wish to use nicotine/tobacco products, and many kids who had no interest in drugs prior to high school have become smokers."

The legal age for buying tobacco in Maryland is 18. Christensen testified that many 18-year-olds buy e-cigarettes and then resell them to younger students.

"I know there are freshmen who bought Juuls from seniors, will go to our local middle school and sell vapes to the middle schoolers," Christensen said.

This has led to a wave of surreptitious e-cigarette use in schools, educators said.

"It's our demon," Nate Carpenter, vice principal of Cape Elizabeth High School in Maine, told the *Times*. "It's the one risky thing that you can do in your life—with little consequence, in their mind—to show that you're a little bit of a rebel."

In 2017, more than 1 in 4 [high school seniors](#) said they had vaped during the past year—and most apparently don't know they're toying with a potentially addictive product, according to the federal government's latest *Monitoring the Future* survey.

Sward and other tobacco-control experts argue that Juul and similar companies are targeting children with their products.

The variety of flavors "are attractive to kids," Sward said, and devices like the Juul are sold in convenience stores and gas stations, "right where tobacco companies who are targeting kids go.

"It's deeply troubling, but Juul is like every other e-cigarette company in that they've ripped all these tactics straight from Big Tobacco's playbook," Sward said.

Gregory Conley, president of the American Vaping Association, argued that "Juul Labs is being unfairly hit with an onslaught of negative media articles that assume ill intentions on behalf of the company.

"While we support vigorous enforcement of youth access laws, we disagree with activists who believe that new restrictions, taxes and bans on adult products have ever solved a problem involving youth rebellion," Conley said.

Still, Sward said the legal age for tobacco products needs to be raised to 21 and the FDA needs to curtail some of the marketing tactics that appeal directly to children.

Parents also need to learn about these camouflaged e-cigarette devices, Sward said.

Unfortunately, there's a learning curve in this for parents, said Michael McAlister, the principal at Northgate High School in Walnut Creek, Calif.

"If I had a pack of cigarettes in my room as a kid, that would have been discovered," McAlister told the *Times*. "Here we're dealing with, first of all, 'what's a Juul?' "

More information: Erika Sward, assistant vice president, national

advocacy, American Lung Association, Washington, D.C.; Gregory Conley, president, American Vaping Association, Stratford, Conn.; April 2, 2018, *The New York Times*

The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [e-cigarettes](#).

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