

Does nicotine exposure harm kids? Some tobacco users don't think so

July 17 2018, by Anna Varela

Users of tobacco products are less likely than the public to agree that nicotine exposure is dangerous for children, according to a study by a group of tobacco researchers at the School of Public Health at Georgia State University.

The study, titled "Adults' Perceptions of Nicotine Harm to Children," also found that people with less than a high school education and some other subgroups were less likely to agree that [nicotine](#) is "definitely harmful" to [children](#). The authors said the results could help inform the development of [public health](#) campaigns to protect children.

Nicotine exposure can take many forms aside from smoking cigarettes, including being absorbed through the skin or swallowed. The proliferation of electronic cigarettes and other novel [tobacco products](#) has introduced new delivery systems for nicotine, including concentrated liquids in bottles that can hold the equivalent of 2-3 teaspoons and which often come in sweet candy or fruit flavors that can appeal to children.

The number of children suffering nicotine poisoning has grown sharply in the U.S. in recent years, the authors note. Despite new regulations requiring child-safe packaging, several hundred exposures each month are still reported across the country. Other research studies have found that [nicotine exposure](#) can harm children's development from the womb through adolescence, when the brain's functions are still maturing.

The study analyzed the responses of nearly 12,000 respondents who

participated in surveys in fall 2015 and fall 2016 as part of a national, representative online panel conducted by marketing research institute GfK.

Most respondents (83.2 percent) agreed that nicotine is "definitely harmful" to children. Among users of tobacco products, 73.8 percent agreed with that statement and among users of electronic nicotine devices such as e-cigarettes, 70.9 percent agreed. Among people with less than a [high school education](#), 75.3 percent agreed, and among the racial and ethnic groups analyzed, African-Americans had the lowest level of agreement at 76 percent.

Results of the study are published in the journal *Pediatrics*. Catherine Kemp, a doctoral candidate at the School of Public Health, is the lead author.

The study did not ask respondents to assess the potential dangers of nicotine by type of product or delivery system. The authors recommend additional research that would focus on such questions.

More information: Catherine B. Kemp et al. Adults' Perceptions of Nicotine Harm to Children, *Pediatrics* (2018). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-0051](#)

Provided by Georgia State University

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