

Washington DC sues e-cigarette firm Juul for targeting minors

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Washington DC has joined the states of New York and California in suing Juul labs, the United States' largest electronic cigarette manufacturer, for targeting youngsters with its marketing campaigns.

The vaping industry faces intense scrutiny for an epidemic of lung ailments that has killed more than 40 people and sickened over 2,000 in recent months, as well as skyrocketing use among minors.

Juul had illegally sold to underage customers, used [social media platforms](#) like Facebook and Instagram to advertise to them, and misrepresented the safety of its products, according to a lawsuit filed by Washington's district government on Tuesday.

"We're seeking to stop JUUL from engaging in these illegal practices that have dragged a new generation into nicotine addiction," the capital's Attorney General Karl Racine said on Twitter.

The company specifically targeted [young people](#) through the use of flavorings, a sleek design and an altered [chemical composition](#) designed to appeal to first-time smokers, according to the lawsuit.

The court filing also claimed Juul employed "influencers"—who are paid to promote products to their followers on social media—to appeal to a younger market.

The company said it had not yet reviewed the complaint but was focused on combating underage use.

Juul had "suspended all broadcast, print, and digital product advertising in the US and are investing in scientific research," said a statement by company spokesman Ted Kwong.

The firm has previously denied that its products were aimed at minors and has pulled certain flavorings, such as mint and mango, from the market.

More than five million middle and [high school students](#) reported using e-

[cigarettes](#) in the past 30 days, an all-time high, the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey reported this month.

US federal regulators this summer opened an investigation into potentially "deceptive marketing" by Juul after the surge in vaping-related deaths.

President Donald Trump said he was considering a ban on flavored e-cigarette products in September but walked back the idea after a vigorous industry lobbying campaign.

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