

Almost 14 million U.S. adults vape, with use rising fastest in young

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(HealthDay)—The number of Americans using electronic cigarettes is

soaring, especially among youth, a new study finds.

Nearly 14 million U.S. adults vaped in 2018, up from just over 11 million adults in 2016. The increase was seen in all socioeconomic groups, the researchers found.

"An increasing number of individuals are using e-cigarettes, especially in the younger age groups, which suggests that more individuals are becoming addicted to e-cigarettes rather than just experimenting with them, making the increased uptake among tobacco-naïve individuals even more concerning," said lead researcher Dr. Olufunmilayo Obisesan. She's a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease, in Baltimore.

"The increase in [e-cigarette use](#) among individuals with other health-risk behaviors is also concerning, particularly in light of the outbreak of e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injuries that has been linked to the vaping of tetrahydrocannabinoids [THC]," she said. THC is the main mind-altering ingredient found in marijuana.

Between 2016 and 2018, [young adults](#) aged 18 to 24 years old were the fastest-growing population to start using e-cigarettes. E-cigarette use in that age group increased from 9% in 2016 to 15% in 2018, and use among students increased from 6% in 2016 to 12% in 2018.

E-cigarette use even increased among people who had never smoked traditional cigarettes—from more than 1.4% in 2016 to 2.3% in 2018, the findings showed.

Also, people who were into other risky behaviors—such as drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana—were more likely to use e-cigarettes, the study authors said.

For the study, the researchers collected data on more than one million Americans who took part in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System for 2016 to 2018.

"Increase in e-cigarette use among adults in the U.S., particularly daily use, is reflective of the addictive potential of e-cigarettes," Obisesan said. "This is very important to note, particularly for the youth and for individuals who currently use or are considering using them as a means of experimentation."

The report was published online Sept. 8 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Stanton Glantz, a professor of medicine at the Center for Tobacco Control, Research and Education at the University of California, San Francisco, said the increase in [e-cigarette](#) use is troubling because the health risks of e-cigarettes are similar to the risks linked to traditional cigarettes.

"I think there's some things that are pretty clear now—one is in terms of lung disease. E-cigarettes are about as bad as cigarettes—you're still breathing in ultrafine particles, heavy metals and flavors that have high pulmonary toxicity," he said.

Glantz also pointed out that the damage e-cigarettes can cause in the lungs may also make COVID-19 infections more severe.

E-cigarette use has also been tied to an increased risk of heart disease, and in [animal experiments](#), to cancer and DNA damage, he added.

The bottom line for Glantz is that e-cigarettes aren't safe alternatives to regular cigarettes and often lead to dual use.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has the power to regulate e-

cigarettes, and they could actually ban them, Glantz said.

"The FDA can simply say, we're not going to allow these products to be sold," he said. "In order to sell e-cigarettes in the United States, you need to have what's called a marketing order. If the FDA doesn't grant a marketing order, then the product can't be sold. If the product can't be legally sold, that will solve the problem."

More information: For more on e-cigarettes, head to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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