

Vaping and substance use were down for teens during COVID-19 lockdown, but researchers predict not for long

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When researchers at FIU's Center for Children and Families conducted a study to look at the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and substance

use among teens, they expected substance use would increase.

However, they found that [vaping](#) and [substance use](#) were down—but they predict not for long.

"Given the unanticipated, sudden and sustained disruption due to COVID-19, we were expecting for teens to engage in higher levels of vaping and substance use," said Elisa Trucco, FIU psychology associate professor and co-lead on the study.

"What we found instead was that vaping and substance use were down, but there was a major increase in anxiety, depression and stress among teens."

Researchers found that all e-cigarette users and approximately 85 percent of alcohol and marijuana users in their sample of 129 participants reported that their use either decreased or stayed the same since the COVID-19 lockdown.

While families have been dealing with many unforeseen obstacles, some factors researchers found that negatively impacted a teen's mental [health](#) included increased exposure to COVID-19 related media coverage and lack of technical resources such as computers and WiFi during remote learning.

Researchers predict that as teens go back to their normal social interactions over the summer and during the upcoming school year, substance use and vaping will have an even bigger increase to offset all the mental health problems teens have been experiencing.

"The good news is that in a separate study we recently published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, we found that parents make a significant impact on a teen's decision to engage in vaping," Trucco said. "As teens

transition back into their normal routines, parents should be proactive and have these important conversations with their teens to reduce their chances of vaping and help improve their mental health."

Researchers also recommend encouraging teens to engage in healthy coping strategies like eating healthy, keeping a consistent schedule and exercising to help offset [mental health](#) problems.

"While a teen's decision to vape is influenced by their peers, it seems like parents have the upper hand," said Matthew Sutherland, FIU psychology associate professor and co-lead on the study. "Parents should take advantage of that opportunity to have an open conversation and develop adaptive coping strategies with their [teen](#)."

Provided by Florida International University

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