

Young people who vape more likely to report chronic stress

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Young people who have used e-cigarettes are more than twice as likely to report experiencing chronic stress, according to research presented at the [European Respiratory Society International Congress](#) in Milan, Italy.

The study was presented by Dr. Teresa To, a senior scientist at The

Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto, Canada. She said, "Research is starting to show how vaping affects [young people](#)'s physical and mental health. For example, our previous research has shown that those who vape are more likely to suffer an [asthma attack](#). In this study we were particularly interested in the relationship between vaping, mental health and quality of life among young people."

The researchers used data from the Canadian Health Measures Surveys, a national survey designed to represent the Canadian population. It included 905 people aged between 15 and 30 years, of which 115 (12.7%) said they had used e-cigarettes.

The data showed that although young people who vaped were more likely to be physically active, they were also more likely to report experiencing extreme chronic stress in their lives.

Dr. To said, "Chronic stress can lead to [mental health](#) conditions such as anxiety and depression. It's important for young people experiencing [chronic stress](#) to be given support early on to help them avoid resorting to unhealthy coping mechanisms like vaping or smoking. Vaping is not an effective way to cope with stress, but stress and anxiety can trigger vape cravings, and make it harder for a user to quit."

The researchers point out that while their study shows a link between vaping and stress in young people, it does not show whether stress caused an increase in vaping, or whether vaping increased experiences of stress, or if another factor led to an increase in both. However, their research did take into account other factors that are known to influence stress, such as income, [alcohol consumption](#) and [health conditions](#) like asthma and diabetes.

Dr. To added, "We do not know why young people using e-cigarettes tend to be more physically active, but it could be that they are trying to

control their weight with exercise and believe vaping could help."

The results also indicated that young people who use e-cigarettes had poorer quality of life but lower risks of some signs of ill health, such as [high blood pressure](#), although these findings did not reach statistical significance.

"At the time of the study, this group of young people had good physical health overall; however, we need to study the effects of e-cigarettes in the longer term to understand their impact on young people's health. We know that stress induces [oxidative stress](#) and inflammation in the body and these play an important role in the risk of developing chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes and [cardiovascular disease](#)," Dr. To added.

Professor Elif Dağlı, who is chair of the European Respiratory Society's group on Tobacco, smoking control and [health education](#), and was not involved in the research, said, "This study suggests a link between vaping and stress among young people, and it adds to what we already know about the effects of vaping on young people's health."

"Vaping is still relatively new, but the numbers of children and young people using e-cigarettes are rising rapidly. We need more research on the impacts of vaping, but we also need to raise awareness of the harms of using e-cigarettes and provide support to help young people avoid or quit vaping."

"This is one of several studies about the effects of vaping that are being presented at the European Respiratory Society International Congress. In particular, we will be examining the influence of flavored e-cigarettes and looking for ways to end the epidemic of vaping among children and adolescents."

More information: Abstract no: OA4231, "E-cigarette use and quality of life in young adults: a Canadian health measure survey study", by Teresa To et al; Presented in session, "Selected tobacco and nicotine research" at 09:30-10:45 CEST on Tuesday 12 September 2023.

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Provided by European Respiratory Society

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