

# Addressing Youth E-Cigarette Use



Tobacco Prevention  
and Cessation

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Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), also known as vaping devices (vapes), are battery-operated devices that heat a liquid to produce an aerosol that users inhale. This aerosol typically contains nicotine, flavorings, and other additives. The term e-cigarette is often used to refer to a broad class of tobacco products which also includes electronic cigars (e-cigars), electronic hookahs (e-hookahs), and other products.



## Protecting Youth

More needs to be done to protect youth and prevent tobacco companies from marketing their dangerous products to kids. Early use of any tobacco product can lead to long-term addiction. Additionally, because young people's bodies and minds are developing, substance use, including nicotine, at this stage can impact their health and growth and lead to a wiring of unhealthy behaviors in the brain.<sup>1</sup> According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, there is substantial evidence that e-cigarette use increases the risk of using combustible cigarettes among youth and young adults.<sup>2</sup>

### From the Harmful Effects of Nicotine

E-cigarette liquids and pods often contain nicotine, with non-nicotine products accounting for less than 1% of product sales.<sup>3</sup> Exposure to nicotine raises several health concerns, including:

- **Addiction:** Nicotine is highly addictive. There is evidence that e-cigarette use results in symptoms of dependence on e-cigarettes.
- **Impaired youth brain development:** Nicotine use can disrupt adolescent brain development, including parts of the brain that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction.
- **Impaired fetal development:** Nicotine use by pregnant women is toxic to fetuses and impairs fetal brain and lung development.
- **Poisoning:** E-cigarette solutions can have very high concentrations of nicotine, which creates a risk of overdosing or poisoning.<sup>1-5</sup>

### From the Aggressive Marketing and Attractive Flavors

Commercial tobacco companies know that getting youth addicted can lead to a long-term customer and their tactics can include:

- Working to increase the appeal of tobacco products to youth, including celebrity endorsements, sports and music sponsorships, and themes that resonate with youth, such as rebellion and glamor.
- Manufacturing and selling e-cigarettes in over 7,000 unique flavors, including candy and fruit flavors that may appeal to youth. The availability of flavors continues to be the most common reason for using e-cigarettes among Indiana youth.<sup>1,6</sup>

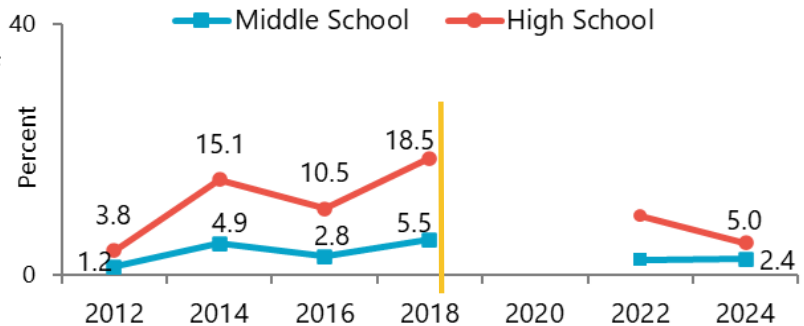
## Fast Facts

- In Indiana, nearly **1 in 20** high school students and **1 in 40** middle school students reported current use of an e-cigarette.
- In addition to nicotine, most e-cigarettes contain other potentially toxic substances.
- The tobacco industry continues to target youth, not only with aggressive advertising and marketing of flavors but even with "educational programs" for schools.
- Suspension and/or expulsion of youth for tobacco possession in schools only exacerbates the situation and does nothing to address the nicotine addiction.

Because of this aggressive and ongoing targeting, students continue to use e-cigarettes.

- In 2024, nearly **1 in 20 or 5.0% of Hoosier high school students** and **1 in 40 or 2.4% of Hoosier middle school students** reported current use (past-30 days) of an e-cigarette.<sup>7</sup>
- E-cigarette use peaked in 2018 with nearly 1 in 5 high school students reporting current use of e-cigarettes. E-cigarette use in 2024 for high school youth was the lowest its been since 2012.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2024, e-cigarettes were again the most commonly used tobacco product among Hoosier youth as well as youth across the U.S. Nationally, 7.8% of high school students and 3.5% of middle school students reported current use of e-cigarettes.<sup>7,8</sup>
- E-cigarettes are commonly used alongside other tobacco products including conventional cigarettes, this is referred to as “dual use”. Nearly **3 in 5 (59.9%)** high school students who used e-cigarettes also smoked cigarettes in 2024.<sup>7</sup>

**Current E-cigarette Use among Indiana High School and Middle School Youth, IYTS 2012-2024**



## Addressing Youth Possession and Use of Commercial Tobacco

The tobacco industry has historically and continues to target youth. Some of these targeting practices include creating “educational programs” which were promoted and distributed by the tobacco industry in the 1980s and 1990s. Most recently, a prominent e-cigarette brand promoted an “educational program” and offered schools a chance to test it. Schools should consider these tactics when creating or modifying a policy to address youth possession and of use of commercial tobacco products. It has been recognized by the United States Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Justice (DOJ) that there is a connection between exclusionary discipline (suspension/expulsion) practices and policies and an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems. Furthermore, some of the harms from suspension/expulsion include a decreased likelihood to graduate on time, increase in grade repetition and dropout, and an increased likelihood of involvement with the criminal court system. Additionally, it has been noted that these punishments can be applied unequally.<sup>9,10</sup>

### Public Health Response to E-Cigarettes

Given concerns about the health impact of e-cigarettes, the U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that precautionary strategies to protect youth and young adults from adverse effects related to e-cigarettes are justified.<sup>1</sup> These include strategies modeled after evidence-based tobacco control practices such as:



- Incorporating e-cigarettes into smoke-free policies, such as tobacco-free school grounds policies



- Preventing youth access to e-cigarettes



- Regulation of e-cigarette marketing that is likely to attract youth and young adults



- Educational initiatives aimed at youth and young adults

## Resources for Tobacco and Nicotine Addiction

Those who use tobacco, including e-cigarettes who want to end their dependence on tobacco should contact a healthcare provider for assistance and call **Quit Now Indiana** at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit **QuitNowIndiana.com**. Additional resources include **Ex Program**, a Truth Initiative texting service for young people who want to quit e-cigarettes, and **Live Vape Free**, a youth-focused program which offers texting and a mobile application (text INDIANA to 873373).

## References:

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