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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Youth Tobacco Use and Access

It is no surprise that our children and teens have struggled over the past 24 months. Their entire world was shaken, and some have coped with these changes better than others. Some teens have utilized positive coping strategies, while others have turned to negative and even dangerous ways to deal. One of the more harmful coping strategies is utilizing substances like alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine.

In September 2021, the FDA and CDC released findings from the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey. They found that more than 2 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes in 2021 and that 1 in 4 used these products daily. This is alarming as WI youth smoking rates had dropped to less than 5% in recent years. This spike in e-cigarette (ie: vape products) use among teens has public health specialists scrambling. Tobacco prevention groups, coalitions, and teams had done a remarkable job at reducing traditional cigarette rates from 30% to less than 5% and it appears as though we are “starting over” with our efforts to curb the use of vaping products.

The new tobacco and e-cigarette products pose a unique challenge for parents because they no longer look like the tobacco products we might be familiar with. Tobacco companies are making their products cheaper, more accessible, and easier to hide from adults than ever before. These new products come in a wide range of shapes and styles—from nicotine toothpicks, and little cigars, to disposable e-cigs and wearable vaping gear like hoodies and backpacks. Although the colorful packaging and fruity flavors might make these products seem harmless, they still deliver high levels of nicotine, a chemical that can create a lifelong addiction to these products.

According to new data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, more Wisconsin kids are being sold tobacco products illegally. The data comes from the 2021 Synar survey, which examines the number of retailers that sell tobacco to minors. The 2021 rate of 14.1% is up from 5.5% in 2019! The Green Lake County Health Department finds this steep increase alarming. A critical difference between the 2019 Synar Survey and the 2021 Synar Survey is that the federal tobacco purchasing age was raised from 18 to 21 at the end of 2019. The survey was not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19. Of the products that were sold to the youth, 16.1% were vape products and 19.3% were candy or fruit-flavored cigarillos. Both are highly attractive, and equally addictive, to the younger generation.

There is information for parents about products, tips for talking to kids about tobacco, and resources and advice for helping a young person quit, if they have started, at TobaccoIsChanging.org. Additional resources to assist youth in quitting e-cigarettes are at teen.smokefree.gov and anyone, including teens can get help to quit tobacco products by calling 1-800-QUIT NOW (784-8669) or by texting VAPEFREE to 873373 for help to quit vaping.

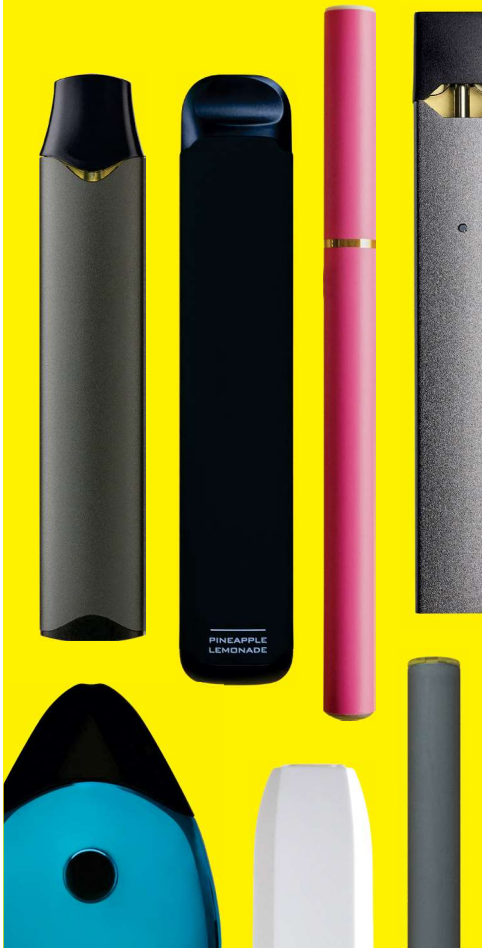
TOBACCO IS CHANGING

Learn the Products

Cigarette use may be dropping among Wisconsin's youth, but newer, less recognizable tobacco products are gaining popularity fast. And that's not good, because there's no such thing as a safe tobacco product.

E-Cigarettes

Electronic smoking devices, or "vapes," come in many shapes and sizes, and their use has skyrocketed among Wisconsin youth.



Little Cigars and Cigarillos

Shredded tobacco tightly rolled in tobacco paper or leaves, cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos come in different sizes and flavors.

Smokeless Tobacco

Smokeless products like dip, snus, and chew aren't safe. They still contain nicotine and other dangerous, cancer-causing chemicals.

