

Teens Who Use E-Cigs Found Likelier to Smoke

By TRIPP MICKLE

Ninth-graders who used electronic cigarettes were more likely to smoke cigarettes, cigars or hookahs than peers who never tried the battery-powered devices, a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found.

The research is some of the first to address fear among health officials that e-cigarettes could become a gateway to traditional cigarettes. The results come as the largely unregulated \$3.5 billion e-cigarette industry faces mounting criticism from health groups and lawmakers concerned about teens using the devices, which heat liquid nicotine into vapor.

The study focused on ninth-graders at 10 public schools in Los Angeles who had tried e-cigarettes before the fall of 2013. Researchers surveyed those students in spring 2014 and fall 2014, and discovered that they were about 2½ times as likely as their peers to have smoked traditional cigarettes, five times as likely to have smoked cigars, and three times as likely to have smoked hookahs.

Researchers didn't determine if using e-cigarettes led teens to try smoking. But Adam Leventhal, who led the study as director of the University of Southern California Health, Emotion and Addiction Laboratory, said the results showed that a "disproportionate number of smokers were e-cigarette users" first.

Because there is no federal law restricting e-cig sales to minors, more than 45 states have passed their own rules prohibiting sales of the devices to any



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The link is likely to escalate calls for more regulation of e-cigarettes.

one under 18, the minimum purchase age for cigarettes.

The link between e-cigarettes and smoking is likely to escalate calls for regulators to treat the devices as traditional cigarettes. According to a survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released in April, e-cig use tripled among U.S. teens last year. That study found that for the first time, more high-school students puffed on the devices—13.4%—than traditional smokes—9.2%.

In the new study, after six months, 31% of e-cigarette users said they had smoked, compared with 8.1% of students who hadn't used e-cigarettes. After 12 months, 25% of e-cigarette users reported smoking, compared with 9.3% of students who hadn't tried e-cigs.

"We interpreted it as teens who used e-cigarettes and enjoyed the experience of inhaling nicotine might be more liable to try" other tobacco products, Prof. Leventhal said. He added more research was needed to determine why that was the case.

The study was funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

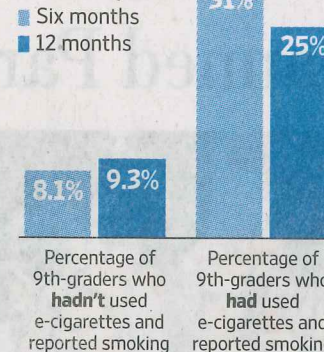
E-cigarettes are considered by most tobacco researchers to be less harmful than regular cigarettes, which release more than 60 carcinogens. But health officials have warned that nicotine is addictive at any age and can adversely affect brain development in adolescents.

E-cigs have become a flash point over the past year. The Food and Drug Administration proposed rules more than a year

Puff or Pass?

Ninth-graders who used e-cigarettes were much more likely to use combustible tobacco products than those who hadn't.

Use in the past...



Source: *Journal of the American Medical Association*
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ago that would give it the authority to regulate the industry and require e-cig manufacturers to submit products for federal approval. It is expected to complete those rules in the coming weeks.

But in contrast to cigarette regulation, the FDA hasn't proposed rules preventing the industry from advertising on television and radio. It hasn't proposed banning online sales or restricting companies from offering flavors like cotton candy and watermelon that appeal to children.

Matthew Myers, president of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said the study by itself can't give a final answer about the consequences of e-cigs but does heighten concern the devices will increase the likelihood that

"never-smoking youth will go on to use tobacco products."

"The failure of the FDA to regulate this product has created a nationwide human experiment we could pay the price for over decades," Mr. Myers said.

A spokesman said the FDA is "moving expeditiously" to finalize the rules. He added that when completed, the rules "will represent a significant first step in the agency's ability to effectively regulate these additional tobacco products, and the public-health burden of tobacco use in this country."

The study is bad news for the vaping industry, which champions e-cigarettes as a tool for adults to quit smoking. Vape shops, liquid nicotine manufacturers and device makers have been worried about the damage the coming FDA rules could do to their businesses, many of which are small and would have a difficult time if required to cover multimillion-dollar costs of submitting products for FDA approval.

Greg Conley, president of the American Vaping Association, an industry-funded advocacy group, criticized the study in a statement for not measuring habitual use of e-cigs or cigarettes and said it "will be twisted and used to push for unjustified excise taxes and small-business-killing regulations."

"While reasonable measures to control youth access are warranted, all policy decisions about vaping must consider not just youth, but also the adults who would otherwise be smoking in the absence of these innovative technology products," Mr. Conley said.