

Study finds spike in teen marijuana vaping

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Marijuana vaping spiked this year among teens as other substance use declined, according to a new study.

“We’ve made a lot of progress over the past two decades in reducing teen substance use. ... Unfortunately, this new mode of delivery for substance use is really making inroads among teens and the policies and rules that schools and other institutions that house teens have put into place to try to prevent drug use, they’re easily defeated by vaping devices,” said lead investigator Richard A. Miech, Ph.D., from the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research.

The institute released data Wednesday from its annual [Monitoring the Future study](#), which is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and included a nationally representative sample of more than 42,000 students in eighth, 10th and 12th grades.

Marijuana vaping

About 14% of 12th-graders vaped marijuana in the past month, nearly double the rate in 2018. The jump was the second largest for any substance in the survey’s history. About 13% of 10th-graders and 4% of eighth-graders also reported vaping marijuana in the past month.

Rates for past-year marijuana vaping were 21% for 12th-graders, 20% for 10th-graders and 7% for eighth-graders, up from 13%, 12% and 4% respectively in 2018.

The increases come as vaping has been linked to 2,000 hospitalizations and 52 deaths from lung injuries in recent months. Most of these injuries occurred among people who vaped marijuana.

Nicotine vaping

Nicotine vaping also continued to rise, following a record-setting spike from 2017-'18. About 35% of 12th-graders in the 2019 survey said they vaped nicotine in the past 12 months up from 30% the year before. About 31% of 10th-graders and 16% of eighth-graders also vaped nicotine.

Rates of past-month nicotine vaping were roughly 25.5% for 12th-graders, 20% for 10th-graders and 10% for eighth-graders, all of which are on the rise.

“It is being vaped at very high contents of nicotine that actually can result in toxicity and significantly increases the risk of addiction,” said NIDA Director Nora Volkow, M.D.

These concerns along with potential harm to developing brains, have led to AAP efforts to ban flavored e-cigarettes, which are known to attract youths.

Asked why they vaped, the 12th-graders' most common reasons were to experiment, because it tastes good and to have a good time.

Marijuana

Despite increases in vaping marijuana, the rates of adolescent use of marijuana in any form in the past 12 months remained stable at 36% of 12th-graders, 29% of 10th-graders and 12% of eighth-graders.

Past-month use also did not change significantly. However, daily use (20 or more occasions in the past 30 days) rose to nearly 5% for 10th-graders and just over 1% for eighth-graders, the highest rates for these age groups since tracking began in 1991

Cigarettes

While vaping continues to rise, past-month cigarette use among 12th-graders fell from 8% to 6% and daily use for this group fell from 4% to 2%.

Rates did not change significantly for younger students. About 3% of 10th-graders and 2% of eighth-graders smoked a cigarette in the past month, while 1% of each group reported daily smoking. Daily rates for all three grade levels are down at least 90% from their peak.

"The implications of these dramatic declines in cigarette smoking are enormous for the health and longevity of this generation of young people — that is, unless the rapid increase in vaping nicotine begins to seriously offset these gains," the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research said in a [news release](#).

Alcohol

Teen drinking is at some of its lowest levels, according to Dr. Miech. Past-month alcohol use was about 29% for 12th-graders, 18% for 10th-graders and 8% for eighth-graders.

Other drugs

Rates of past-year use of any illicit drug other than marijuana were 11.5% for 12th-graders, 9% for 10th-graders and 6.5% of eighth-graders.

Among 12th-graders, misuse of prescription opioids declined from 3.4% to 2.7%.

Dr. Volkow reminded physicians they play an important role in curbing teen substance use.

"Physicians are in a unique position to actually communicate with young patients and encourage them ... to stop if they've started to experiment, or importantly, refer to treatment if they have become addicted to the drug," she said.

Resources

- [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
- [AAP policy "Substance Use Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment for Pediatricians"](#)
- [AAP policy "E-Cigarettes and Similar Devices"](#)
- [AAP policy "Clinical Practice Policy to Protect Children from Tobacco, Nicotine and Tobacco Smoke"](#)
- [AAP policy "The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update"](#)
- [AAP clinical report, "Counseling Parents and Teens About Marijuana Use in the Era of Legalization of Marijuana"](#)
- [AAP policy "Alcohol Use by Youth and Adolescents: A Pediatric Concern"](#)
- [AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence e-cigarette website](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org about marijuana](#)

- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org about talking to teens about drugs and alcohol](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org about vaping](#)

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