

6.2 million youths use tobacco products

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Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

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Nearly a quarter of middle and high school students — 6.2 million youths — use tobacco products, most commonly e-cigarettes.

The findings from the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey come amid continued calls from the AAP and other public health advocates to implement new regulations to keep such products out of the hands of adolescents.

“Our Nation’s youth are becoming increasingly exposed to nicotine, a drug that is highly addictive and can harm brain development,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert R. Redfield, M.D., said in a press release. “Youth use of any tobacco product, including e-cigarettes, is unsafe. It is incumbent upon public health and healthcare professionals to educate Americans about the risks resulting from this epidemic among our youth.”

Among high school students, 53.3% have ever tried a tobacco product, and 31.2% reported current use, according to the data released Thursday by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

About 27.5% use e-cigarettes (4.1 million), 7.6% use cigars, 5.8% use cigarettes, 4.8% use smokeless tobacco, 3.4% use hookahs and 1.1% use pipes.

Among middle school students, 24.3% have ever tried a tobacco product, and 12.5% reported current use. About 10.5% use e-cigarettes (1.2 million), 2.3% use cigars, 2.3% use cigarettes, 1.8% use smokeless tobacco and 1.6% use hookahs.

Due to changes in methodology from previous years, the CDC said data couldn’t be compared reliably to previous years.

Curiosity was the most common reason youths said they tried e-cigarettes followed by knowing other users and the availability of flavors. The data also showed nearly 70% of youths who use tobacco use flavored products. Just over half of tobacco product users said they were thinking about quitting.

E-cigarettes have been making headlines in recent months due to their link to lung injuries. The [CDC reports](#) 2,291 have been hospitalized from these lung injuries, and 48 have died. Most were using vaping products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), and the CDC has said the diluent vitamin E acetate may be linked to the lung injuries. However, it hasn’t ruled out other substances and products.

Lung injuries aren’t the only danger of e-cigarette use. They also are addictive and harmful to developing brains. The AAP has been urging lawmakers to ban flavored products and prohibit anyone under 21 from

purchasing tobacco products. The new report also recommends those moves.

In September, the Trump administration announced plans to pull flavored e-cigarettes from the market pending FDA review. However, it has not moved forward with such restrictions. In late November, President Donald Trump gathered health experts, e-cigarette manufacturers and retailers at the White House to discuss the issue.

AAP President-elect Sara “Sally” H. Goza, M.D., FAAP, **told President Trump** e-cigarette use by children is a crisis.

“The nation’s doctors are here and we’re all of the same message, that we need to take all flavors off the market pending FDA investigation of that,” Dr. Goza said. “We are worried if we leave one flavor on the market, even menthol, that the children will go to that.”

Resources

- [CDC e-cigarette website for health care providers](#)
- [AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence e-cigarette website](#)
- [AAP policy "E-Cigarettes and Similar Devices"](#)
- [AAP policy "Clinical Practice Policy to Protect Children From Tobacco, Nicotine, and Tobacco Smoke"](#)
- [FDA information for health care providers and state health departments,](#)
- [FDA's The Real Cost youth e-cigarette prevention campaign](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org about e-cigarettes](#)
- [AAP News coverage of vaping injuries](#)
- [Pediatrics e-cigarette article collection](#)
- [Surgeon general's interactive website about e-cigarettes geared toward parents and others who work with youths](#)