

Is Youth Vaping an "Epidemic" in Southern Maryland?

Posted by [JeroldMassie](#) On 01/04/2019

Lexington Park, MD - According to the [2014 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), all three Southern Maryland counties rank higher than the state average for youth who have tried vaping and those that currently vape. St. Mary's County ranks the highest in the area with 41.5 percent of students trying vapor products and 25.9 percent currently using them. The St. Mary's County Department of Health is attempting to combat the high rates through initiatives like "VapeAware" which provides information on the risks of using electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).

The FDA states that these noncombustible tobacco products use "an 'e-liquid' that may contain nicotine, as well as varying compositions of flavorings, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, and other ingredients." The FDA's web site elaborates that when the liquid in the e-cigarettes is heated it creates an aerosol that is then inhaled. One of the issues with vaping is that it has been found to cause popcorn lung through some of the chemicals in the e-liquid.

Popcorn lung got its namesake because of the chemical diacetyl which was previously found in popcorn until it was discovered that, when inhaled, the chemical caused "bronchiolitis obliterans" or "scarring of the tiny air sacs in the lungs resulting in the thickening and narrowing of the airways," according to the American Lung Association. The web site states that "researchers at Harvard found that 39 of 51 e-cigarette brands contained diacetyl."

During a presentation at the St. Mary's County Health Fair this past fall, the SMC Health Department expressed that their concern is that many of the youth using vape products are unaware of the risks and that they are falling victim to questionable marketing tactics. The e-cigarette market is often portrayed as a "safe alternative to smoking," but as the CDC states, "cigarettes are extraordinarily dangerous" meaning that though it may be "safer," that doesn't make it "safe."

The FDA, this past year, took action against e-liquid companies who are marketing their products as food items like Reddi-Wip and Vanilla Wafers. The agency has also begun cracking down on the illegal sales of vape products to youth, issuing [1,300 warning letters and fines](#) to "retailers who illegally sold JUUL and other e-cigarette products to minors during a nationwide, undercover blitz of brick-and-mortar and online stores" that took place over the summer.

In the same press release that detailed the "historic action" against the 1,300 retailers, FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb stated that "e-cigarette use among youth has hit epidemic proportions."

The CDC web site has a list of ways to prevent your child from using e-cigarettes [here](#), but the gist of it is to inform your children on the risks that affect them in particular.

For more information on vaping in St. Mary's County, visit the SMC Health Department's VapeAware page [here](#).

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