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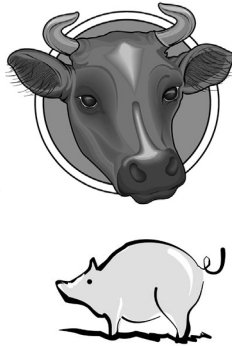


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Michigan Vapers are Seriously at Risk

by Kate and Kimmie Holtrop

On October 2, 2019, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued a statewide emergency ban of flavored vaping cartridges. The ban would have made our state the first in the nation to outlaw sweet, fruit, and mint flavored vape products, and was in effect until March 30, 2020. During the temporary ban, the state attempted to permanently ban flavored vape, but failed when two vape shops filed lawsuits against it.

In October of 2021, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pulled back their own ban on flavored vape products, announcing that they were working on alternative legislation to address youth vaping. The MDHHS's legislation appears to be significantly less than the governor's original full ban.

Despite attractive packaging and flavors, vape products are very dangerous. E-liquids and flavorings contain many harmful ingredients, including chemicals that can cause cancer and lung diseases. They contain 1) THC, an addictive ingredient in marijuana, 2) vitamin E acetate, which is linked to a lung disease known as EVALI, or E-cigarette or Vaping product-use-Associated Lung Injury, 3) metals such as tin, nickel, lead, and cadmium, and 4) ultrafine particles that embed themselves deep in the lungs. These ingredients can cause lung inflammation, asthma, COPD, lung scarring, and damage to the heart and brain. They also weaken the immune system, exacerbate existing lung conditions like asthma and emphysema, and lead to heart attacks. In 2016 nearly 200 e-cigarette users developed severe lung disease in 22 states throughout the country. Long-term effects of vaping are still unknown.

Aside from the above health risks involved, less-harmful side effects may include coughing, shortness of breath, eye irritation, headaches, dry or irritated mouth and throat, and nausea.

In addition to health risks, vaping is responsible for growing nicotine addiction among young people. Bob Wheaton, spokesman for MDHHS, said, "...we have worked to find any solution to this issue—whether it be through rule-making or legislation."

MDHHS rules have become necessary as nicotine use rates among youth have spiked tremendously. From 2017 to 2018, nicotine use went up nearly 80% among high school students and 50% among middle schoolers. Current statistics from Allen Carr's Easyway show that more young people than adults vape. In 2019 9% of Americans from 13-14 years old had vaped nicotine, as opposed to 3.5% in 2017. Almost two-thirds of JUUL pod users between the ages of 15-24 do not know that JUUL contains nicotine.

However, vaping liquid contains a high dosage of nicotine, in some brands equivalent to a whole pack of cigarettes. Recently, juice manufacturers have developed new juice mixtures to give a higher level of nicotine to the user, while at the same time masking the harshness of the drug, so the user, sometimes even unwittingly, is taking in a larger quantity of nicotine. Nicotine in tobacco, as well as in vape juice, turns nearly 30% of casual users into addicts, which is a higher rate than that of any other drug, including heroin and cocaine.

Many people use vaping as a method to quit smoking. According to a study from Cleveland Clinic, about 18% of people who switched from smoking to vaping have been able to quit smoking. That is nearly twice as many as those who used other methods to quit. However, approximately 80% of vapers who quit smoking were still vaping, while 91% of people who quit smoking using other methods stopped using nicotine altogether. WHO and the CDC both agree that vaping cannot be recommended as an aid to quit smoking, as in some cases it can hinder smokers' quitting by prolonging or increasing the individual's addiction to nicotine.

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