

## Health Alert Network

Missoula City-County Health Department

**Date:** October 21, 2019



Please forward to all relevant school personnel.

**Subject:** Public Health Epidemic of Vaping Associated Pulmonary Illness - Resources for Schools

### Background:

E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among all youth. **The use of e-cigarettes among Montana's high school students is five times that of Montana adults.** The 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed 30% of Montana high school students currently use e-cigarettes and more than 58% have tried them. In Montana, 28% of middle school students report having tried e-cigarettes, and 16% report currently using them. Between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of Montana high school students using these products frequently (on 20 or more of the past 30 days) has increased by 243% and **daily use has increased by 263%.**

There are now **33 reported deaths nationwide** due to mysterious lung illnesses tied to vaping and vaping products, including one in Montana. Nearly **1,479 lung injury cases have been linked to e-cigarettes or vaping products in the US** (CDC, 10/15/2019).

There are an alarming number of youth in our state who have started using e-cigarette products and because the availability of flavored e-cigarette is known to attract young users. In fact, a recent report by the FDA states that **96% of 12 to 17-year-olds** who initiated e-cigarette use started with a flavored product, and **70% report the flavors as the reason they use e-cigarettes.**

The Surgeon General has stated that we should protect our children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks by immediately addressing the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use. According to the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program:

- Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm brain development, which continues until age 25.
- E-cigarette aerosol can contain ultrafine particles and cancer-causing chemicals.
- Youth who use e-cigarettes are 4 times more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.
- The long-term health effects of e-cigarette use are unknown.

## Recommendations for Schools:

✓ Address vaping and substance abuse in your curriculum. The following are **FREE curriculum options for grades 5-12:**

- [CATCH My Breath: E-Cigarette & Juul Prevention Program](#)
- [CDC's Know the Risks: A Youth Guide to E-Cigarettes](#)
- [Stanford Medicine: Tobacco Prevention Toolkit on E-Cigarettes](#)

Each prevention curriculum offers a unique approach to discussing e-cigarettes in the classroom, along with teacher resources, parent materials, guidance documents, worksheets and handouts.

✓ Have clear policies prohibiting the use of any tobacco products, including vapor products, on campus - including parking lots and playfields.

✓ Have consequences for students possessing, using or selling tobacco products on campus, including school discipline as well as criminal charges of Minor in Possession which carry fines and other legal consequences.

✓ Host assemblies and parent education nights. You can coordinate with the Missoula City-County Health Department, the American Lung Association, or Project Success Counselors from Western Montana Addiction Services about the perils of vaping and substance abuse.

✓ Offer information to parents outlining the risks and what they can do. Consider sending home a letter to parents or posting information on your website. **We are including a letter that you can utilize as a template.**

✓ Distribute and display resources for students already using: Consider distributing and displaying information in your school to help students quit the use of electronic cigarettes. Montana has partnered with nine other states to launch enhanced tobacco cessation programs for teens called, **My Life, My Quit**. Teens can text or call a toll-free number (1-855-891-9989) dedicated for teens, or they can visit [mylifemquit.com](http://mylifemquit.com) for real-time coaching. Through the program, teens work with a coach who listens and understands their unique needs, provides personalized support, and helps them build a quit plan to become free from nicotine.

Please visit [Missoula.co/vaping](http://Missoula.co/vaping) for more information and resources.

### ***For Infectious Disease Reporting:***

1. Contact Missoula City-County Health Department Infectious Disease Nurse at 406-258-3896 Monday-Friday 9 am to 5 pm
2. For immediate after hours assistance, call 911 and ask them to page the "Health Department Infectious Disease On-Call Pager"

## Template Letter to Parents:

(Include your logo)

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

Did you know that e-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among all youth? 30% of Montana high school students currently use e-cigarettes and more than 58% have tried them. In addition, 28% of middle school students have tried e-cigarettes. Between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of Montana high school students using these products **daily has increased by 263%**. (2019 YRBS)

The Surgeon General has stated that we should protect our children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks by immediately addressing the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use. There are now **33 reported deaths nationwide** due to mysterious lung illnesses tied to vaping and vaping products, including one in Montana. Nearly **1,479 lung injury cases have been linked to e-cigarettes or vaping products in the US**. This is especially concerning because we know that the **use of e-cigarettes among Montana's high school students is five times that of Montana adults**.

Other risks associated with youth e-cigarette product use include:

- Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm brain development, which continues until age 25.
- E-cigarette aerosol can contain ultrafine particles and cancer-causing chemicals.
- Youth who use e-cigarettes are 4 times more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.
- The long-term health effects of e-cigarette use are unknown.

### What can YOU do to address vaping?

- Educate yourself about e-cigarettes and vapor products.
  - [E-cigarettes, Vapes & JUUL: The New Nicotine Addiction in Montana](#)
  - [Montana Office of Public Instruction Resources on E-Cigarettes](#)
- Be aware of the signs of vaping:
  - Fruity aroma - most e-liquids have flavors like mint, vanilla, and fruit punch.
  - Unfamiliar hand-held gadgets - like pens, Juuls (specific brand popular with students that can resemble a computer memory stick).
    - [Tobacco Free California helps parents recognize vapor devices](#)
  - Increased thirstiness - some of the chemicals in e-cigarettes cause dry mouth.
  - Different batteries and chargers - vaporizers need to be charged, most use a USB cable or plug directly into a USB port.
  - Discarded atomizers, cartridges, and pods - the atomizers turn the e-juice into vapor and are rechargeable and eventually disposable.
  - Unaccounted expenditures of money - these products are not cheap.
- Continue to have conversations with your child/children about the dangers of vaping and other forms of drug use.
  - [The American Lung Association Resource for parents: The Vape Talk](#)
- Have clear rules and consequences prohibiting the use of any tobacco products, including vapor products.

- *Encourage tobacco cessation.* To help students quit the use of electronic cigarettes Montana has partnered with nine other states to launch enhanced tobacco cessation programs for teens called, ***My Life, My Quit***. **Teens can text or call a toll-free number (1-855-891-9989) dedicated for teens, or they can visit [mylifemquit.com](http://mylifemquit.com) for real-time coaching.** Through the program, teens work with a coach who listens and understands their unique needs, provides personalized support, and helps them build a quit plan to become free from nicotine.

Please visit [Missoula.co/vaping](http://Missoula.co/vaping) for more information and resources.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,  
(Your School Info)