College Students & E-cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and vapor pens are battery powered devices that deliver vaporized liquid—often containing nicotine\(^1\). They commonly resemble a cigarette but come in many different shapes and sizes. The liquid used to produce the vapor from e-cigarettes is commonly referred to as “juice” and can come in a variety of flavors (e.g., bubble gum, strawberry, and piña colada)\(^2\). The act of puffing an e-cigarette is referred to as “vaping.” Despite controversy about their health effects\(^1\), e-cigarette use is on the rise\(^3\). How does this affect college students and what are some important facts to know?

E-cigarette components:

The following is a summary of the limited research findings to date on e-cigarette use among college students.

**What are the prevalence rates?**
- One large sample of college students found that 4.9% had ever used an e-cigarette in their lifetime and 1.5% had used an e-cigarette in the past month\(^1\).
- The same study found that most college students (88%) who reported ever using an e-cigarette also reported smoking a conventional cigarette in the past\(^1\).

**Are e-cigarettes safe?**
- E-cigarettes do not produce smoke like conventional cigarettes\(^4\). Although the long-term effects of e-cigarette use are not known, current research indicates that e-cigarettes are likely safer than conventional cigarettes\(^1\).
- Some toxins (e.g., nitrosamines, formaldehyde, and diethylene glycol) have been found in e-cigarettes indicating they may not be harmless\(^4-6\).
- Some research indicates that e-cigarettes can help individuals cut down or quit smoking conventional cigarettes\(^7-9\).
- Other studies have found a correlation between convention cigarette use and e-cigarette use\(^10, 11\). This suggests that some may not use e-cigarettes to quit conventional cigarette use.
What is Big Tobacco’s role in e-cigarettes?
- Potential consumers may want to know who is selling a given product. All three major tobacco corporations in the US have developed e-cigarettes:
  - Phillip Morris USA Inc. owns MarkTen e-cigarettes.
  - Reynolds America Inc. launched Vuse.
  - Lolilard, Inc. acquired Blu e-cigarettes.
- E-cigarette companies are using advertising techniques used for conventional cigarettes[12].
  - Using celebrities in ads.
  - Using different types of flavors.
  - Using cartoons.
  - Telling users not to quit, but to switch.

Attitudes among College Students
- College students who have used e-cigarettes have different perceptions about them than individuals who do not use e-cigarettes. Students who have ever used e-cigarettes are more likely to view them as less harmful than conventional cigarettes[1].
- In a sample of college students, there was higher acceptance of vaping in public than acceptance of conventional smoking in public[13].
- Acceptance of e-cigarette smoking was also higher among those who intended to use or try e-cigarettes[13].
- College students who smoke tobacco are more likely to believe that using e-cigarettes will result in social enhancement (e.g., fit in better with friends), will be a positive sensory experience, and less likely to believe that e-cigarettes will have negative health consequences[14].

References
6. FDA, Summary of results: Laboratory analysis of electronic cigarettes conducted by FDA.