



Alcohol use remains at an all time low while vaping use increases among Washington youth

Statewide survey shows lack of knowledge about harms of vaping

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OLYMPIA— While alcohol use among teens remains at an all-time low, and the percentage of teens reporting cigarette smoking is less than half of what it was a decade ago, use of e-cigarette/vapor products has gone up significantly among youth, according to the results of the latest Washington Healthy Youth Survey.

Use of vapor products (battery-operated devices that produce an aerosol by heating a liquid) in the past 30 days among 10th graders increased from 13 percent in 2016 to 21 percent in 2018. Four times as many 10th graders reported vaping (21 percent) as smoking cigarettes (5 percent) in 2018.

More youth are vaping, but their knowledge of content of vaping products and its potential health impacts remains low. Only about a third of 10th graders thought vaping was harmful, according to the survey.

Some of the most popular vapor products are easily concealed. Some vapor liquids contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes, and include flavors and nicotine salts that make it easier to inhale. Nicotine use can harm the developing brain (which develops until age 25), and can increase risk for addiction to other drugs.

Twenty-one percent of 10th graders who use vapor products report using THC (marijuana) in their vapor product. Rates of teen marijuana use have remained steady overall, despite the changing landscape with the legalization of marijuana.

“Kids, families and communities in our state need to be aware of the dangers of vaping,” said Governor Jay Inslee. “Vaping products are too easily accessed by young people, as the survey results show. We must make sure adults understand the issue, and are talking with the children in their lives about this disturbing trend.”

Other results from the substance use portion of the survey:

- **Alcohol use and binge drinking** (having five or more drinks in a row) have declined among youth over the past decade, and were relatively stable between

2016 and 2018. Still, 1 in 5 10th graders report using alcohol in the past month, and 1 in 10 binge drank in the past two weeks.

Nationwide, alcohol use plays a substantial role in all three leading causes of death among youth: injuries, suicides, and homicides. Youth who begin drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol use disorder later in life than those who start after age 21 (National Survey on Drug Use and Health).

- **Marijuana use** has not gone up since 2002, despite the increased normalization of marijuana to changes in state marijuana laws. Frequent use of marijuana (defined as six or more days a month) is down from 2016 among 10th and 12th graders.

However, perception of risk of harm from regular marijuana use has gone down since 2016. In 2018, about one in five 8th graders, one in three 10th graders, and almost half of 12th graders perceived little risk to regular use. Decreases in perceived risk increase the possibility of future use. Any underage use can impact brain development.

About the Healthy Youth Survey

Students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 take the Healthy Youth Survey every two years, voluntarily answering a wide variety of questions about health behaviors from substance use to mental health and school climate. In the fall of 2018, more than 230,000 students took part in the survey. The responses from about 32,000 of those students are used for the statewide sample, with remaining participation informing local results. The survey provides state and community organizations with information to help decide on which teen health issues to focus.

The survey is a collaborative effort between the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB). For more information about the survey, including other results and fact sheets, visit AskHYS.net.

Additional resources

Parents and guardians are the number one influence on children's decisions around substance use. All adults can help teens avoid the negative consequences of substance use by talking with them early and often about the risks, locking up any alcohol, marijuana or prescription drugs in the home, reminding them that most of their peers are making healthy choices, and having clear rules and consequences to discourage use.

- For proven tips on how to talk, monitor and bond with teens: www.StartTalkingNow.org
- For a free tobacco cessation program: www.doh.wa.gov/quit

- For an e-cigarette quit text message program:
www.truthinitiative.org/quitcigarettes