

E-cigarette ads may help lure teens to the habit: study

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(HealthDay)—The more ads for electronic cigarettes middle and high

school students see, the more likely they are to use these devices, a new study finds.

Many experts worry that e-cigarettes are merely a "gateway" product to addictive cigarette smoking.

"Since electronic nicotine devices have the potential to cause harm, result in nicotine addiction and lead to use of traditional cigarettes, advertisement of these devices should be regulated and limited, particularly ads that target youth," said Patricia Folan. She directs the Center for Tobacco Control at Northwell Health in Great Neck, N.Y.

Folan reviewed the findings from the study, which was led by Dr. Tushar Singh of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health.

The study can't prove cause-and-effect. However, the researchers found that U.S. [high school students](#)' use of e-cigarettes rose from 1.5 percent in 2011 to more than 13 percent in 2014. At the same time, [e-cigarette](#) use among middle-[school students](#) rose from 0.6 percent to nearly 4 percent.

According to the study, middle-school kids who said they very often viewed ads for "vaping" products had nearly triple the odds of taking up the habit, compared to similarly aged kids who "rarely" saw the ads.

The risk of e-cigarette use doubled for [high school](#) students who said they very often saw the ads, compared to those who rarely viewed them, the study found.

Between 2011 and 2014, estimated spending on e-cigarette advertising rose from \$6.4 million to \$115 million a year, Singh's team added.

The study authors noted that traditional cigarette advertising was banned from television in the United States in 1971, but e-cigarette advertising is not regulated by the federal government.

The researchers called for comprehensive tobacco prevention and control efforts that target all forms of tobacco use, including e-cigarettes, to reduce young people's exposure to e-cigarette ads and their use of the devices.

Folan agreed. "Giving the U.S. Food and Drug Administration the authority to not only restrict advertising of these products, but to also regulate their ingredients and manufacturing processes, is necessary to avoid youth exposure," she said.

Dr. Ron Marino is associate chair of pediatrics at Winthrop-University Hospital in Mineola, N.Y. He called the new study's findings "a no-brainer."

"We have known that advertising increases substance utilization for decades," he said. "The [e-cigarette] industry knows that they must get the youth started early or they will have lost their window of opportunity."

Bans on cigarette [ads](#) were "a giant step forward in the public health effort to decrease tobacco use among youngsters," Marino said. And "it is only a matter of time before prudent politicians do the same for vaporized poison," he added.

The American Vaping Association, which represents manufacturers, did not respond to a request for comment from HealthDay.

The report is published in the May issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [e-cigarettes](#).

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