

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Vaping-A Serious Health Epidemic

In the midst of the nation's opioid epidemic, a vaping epidemic called EVALI has been slowly killing Americans. EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury) is an acute lung injury that results from inhaling aerosols (usually from electronic cigarettes, vape pens, mods or tanks) that fume because of heating liquid or wax versions of cannabinoids, nicotine, flavoring, additives, etc. As of December 2018, the U.S. surgeon general has declared the epidemic a serious threat to public health because of the sudden increase in patients -a majority of whom are young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 who are hospitalized for vaping-related injuries; symptoms include shortage of breath and a high fevers.

As of December 2019, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has reported that over 40 deaths have occurred as a result of excessive electronic cigarette usage. This trend emerged because of the rapid legalization of cannabis and the surge of social acceptance of vaping culture. This leads to more availability of such products, with many obtaining them from off the street or through other informal mediums.

Vape pens and e-cigarettes contain high doses of THC, CBD or nicotine that can have unpredictable consequences if consumed in excess. THC or CBD strains of marijuana can treat chronic pain and illness but they could also trigger a rapid increase in one's heart rate, leading to heart palpitations and pulmonary issues. Additionally, recent research demonstrates that THC vaping products contain extreme levels of vitamin E acetate. Vitamin E itself is not harmful on its own, but its oil-like properties are connected to the symptoms of pulmonary illness. Meanwhile, nicotine-based cartridge products such as Juuls are known to contain high levels of nicotine that are easily ingestible. They may be less harmful compared to cigarettes, with less toxic chemicals; however, e-cigarettes still possess unknown addictive chemicals that have the same effects of traditional smoking, including cardiovascular disease.

EVALIs impact on youth is astounding. According to the CDC, over 5 million middle and high schoolers have started using e-cigarettes. Vaping products are unsafe because marijuana and nicotine use can lead to memory loss and damage to brain development. It also could lead to habits that are hard to break. Young people using e-cigarettes and vaping products are more likely to smoke actual cigarettes in the future.

To counter such an epidemic, there have been efforts made through public campaigns to raise awareness of its effects. However, that is not enough. More governmental regulations need to

be passed and there needs to be more monitoring by federal agencies over EVALI. The public also needs to take measures to inform themselves of the risks and consequences. Vaping has devolved from a cool trend to a serious health epidemic.

President Trump proposed two routes to tackle vaping: a ban on flavored e-cigarettes, and raising the minimum age of purchase on e-cigarettes from 18 to 21. According to The Washington Post, President Trump has delayed a flavor ban. In response, the House Energy and Commerce Committee passed a bill that would ban flavored tobacco products, raise the minimum age of purchase to 21, and restrict online sales of tobacco products. It is unclear how vaping regulations will unfold, but it is worthwhile to examine potential plans and their implications for youth.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit www.cdc.gov.

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SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about vaping and seeks to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how it's detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.