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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Dispelling Myths on Nicotine Pouches

Of recent with the E-Cigarette Flavor Bans successfully in place the tobacco industry has once again obstructed efforts to deformalize vaping. A variety of flavored newly marketed nicotine products are gaining popularity known as oral nicotine pouches. Despite the Governors efforts to expand the flavor ban to include menthol and all tobacco products they still are unregulated and pose a risk to teens. It is especially concerning as more than half of youth ages 12-17 who smoke use menthol and over 80% of youth who have tried tobacco started with a flavored product. Flavors play a significant role according to 2022 data from the American Lung Association. 85% of young e-cigarette users choose a flavored product.

Oral nicotine pouches are used similarly to snus- a moist type of powdered tobacco typically held in the mouth between the lips and gums. Nicotine is very harmful to young people in any form, and unfortunately the information around them is misleading. With cigarette smoking on the decline, tobacco companies have shifted their focus to “smokeless” tobacco products, including oral nicotine pouches.

Currently 2.5 million middle and high school students reporting e-cigarette use in 2022. Due to the absence of tobacco leaf, the Food and Drug Administration does not classify oral nicotine pouches as a smokeless tobacco product. In 2022, the CDC included oral nicotine pouches in their National Youth Tobacco Survey where they estimated that 1.1% of middle and high school students had used these products.

These products have gained great popularity in recent years: overall sales of nicotine pouch products increased from \$126.06 million units from August to December 2019 to \$808.14 million units from January to March 2022. During this period, sales of nicotine pouch products containing a higher concentration of nicotine (8 mg) increased more rapidly than products with lower nicotine concentrations (e.g., 4 mg and 6 mg). In addition, Altria has announced to its investors that it will be introducing a new version of its nicotine pouch On! product that will have a higher concentration of nicotine than its current On! Products. Additionally, advertisements for oral nicotine pouches focus on flavors and emphasize the ease of using nicotine pouches anywhere, Leading nicotine pouch brands spent nearly \$25 million on ads between January 2019 and September 2021.

Nicotine concentrations differ across oral nicotine pouch brands. For example, in the United States Zyn is sold in 3 and 6 mg, Velo is sold in 2, 4, and 7 mg, and On! is sold in 1.5, 2, 3.5, 4, and 8 mg, according to each brand’s website. Altria’s new On! nicotine pouch product, called On! Plus, will offer nicotine strengths of 6, 9, and 12mg.

Oral nicotine pouches come in an array of youth-friendly flavors. The availability of sweet, fruity, and candy-like flavors is troubling because, as pod-based e-cigarettes like JUUL face federal flavor restrictions in response to high rates of youth vaping, young people may switch to other nicotine products that still offer flavors. For example, disposable e-cigarettes, which were exempted from the partial flavor restrictions FDA enacted in January 2020, have skyrocketed in popularity. Sales of menthol-flavored e-cigarettes, which were also exempted, experienced a drastic, immediate rise in sales with an increase of almost \$60 million and its market share more than doubled. There are many myths about menthol, whereas it has been shown to be very harmful and easier to start and harder to quit.

SAFE's After 3 Elementary and Middle School Life Skills Programs have been employing environmental strategies, education and resources from their community technical partners at TAC to emphasize to youth that it's not just Menthol. Oral nicotine products have yet to be regulated as stringently as other tobacco products. The FDA places some regulations on these products, including requirements that manufacturers submit certain information to the agency, use nicotine warning labels, and comply with some basic marketing restrictions. No current federal regulations exist that prevent or restrict the sale of oral nicotine pouches, and the marketing restrictions on these products are not as strict as those on combustible tobacco products.

The long-term health effects of emerging products like nicotine pouches still remain unknown; but we do know youth use of nicotine in any form is unsafe. Nicotine use during adolescence can disrupt the formation of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction. Research has shown early age of nicotine use is correlated with daily use and lifetime nicotine dependence. Nicotine use can also intensify symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Quitting oral nicotine pouches can be challenging, and the high levels of nicotine in pouches can lead to nicotine addiction. The good news is there is support and similar strategies used to quit other nicotine products for youth who have become dependent on oral pouches.

The American Lung Association's "Not On Tobacco (N-O-T)" is the Association's voluntary tobacco/vaping cessation program for teens ages 14 – 19. Over the 10-session program, participants identify their reasons for using tobacco, including e-cigarettes, healthy alternatives to tobacco use and people who will support them in their efforts to quit. Visit American Lung on line or call 1-800-LUNGUSA to learn more.

The American Lung Association is committed to helping educate, intervene, and prevent the use of tobacco and nicotine by the next generation. The Lung HelpLine, available via phone or online and is ready to assist teens between the ages of 13 -17 in quitting tobacco, including vaping. Call 800-LUNGUSA or chat online through their website at Lung.org. Certified tobacco treatment specialists provide guidance and support along with developing individualized quit plans.

The best method of avoiding harm is not to ever start smoking/vaping and "Live SAFE".

For help Quitting smoking/vaping or to help a loved one beat a Nicotine Addiction please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org. "The American Lung

Association says the only thing that should go into your lungs is clean air, so if you're inhaling anything, it could potentially be toxic to your lungs!

The New York State Smokers' Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco and the service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit them at: <https://www.nysmokefree.com/>.for Quit Help.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all combustible and electronic products with marijuana and tobacco. The Agency is employing environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.