

Press Release

June 29, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Cannabis Vaping in Youth and Young Adults

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), youth cannabis vaping is a major public health concern in the USA. Recent data shows it has surged to become the primary method of cannabis consumption for teenagers. Driven by flavored products and high potency, this trend poses severe risks to adolescent brain development. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) maintain Current Trends and Prevalence are due to surging popularity as cannabis vaping has increased dramatically. Studies indicate that a significant percentage of U.S. adolescents currently vape THC (the primary psychoactive component in cannabis). The use of flavored marijuana vaping solutions among teens has also surged, shifting from a minority to a majority. Sweet and fruit flavors are particularly popular because they successfully mask the natural odor of marijuana, making the habit easier to conceal from adults. Additionally, modern vape products contain highly concentrated forms of THC, with some extracts and distillates boasting potency levels of up to 90%.

Recent research in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs focused on the use of electronic vaporizers to deliver cannabis (“cannabis vaping”) discussing current evidence on the psychosocial characteristics of adolescents and young adults who vape cannabis. Previous data showed that adolescents and young adults who used e-cigarettes to deliver nicotine (“vaped”) were 3.5 times more likely to use cannabis than those who did not vape. Recently, it has become possible to vape cannabis in the form of liquid, oil, dried flower, or wax via a vaping device or e-cigarette, allowing for the inhalation of cannabinoids, including cannabidiol (CBD) and the psychoactive delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

The popularity of cannabis vaping has increased among adolescents and young adults in the United States and Canada over the years demonstrated by a 5-fold increase in the past-30-day prevalence of cannabis vaping, increasing from 1.6% in 2013 to 8.4% in 2020, among U.S. and Canadian adolescents. The increasing prevalence of cannabis vaping in young people could be driven by the discreet and convenient delivery method and the perception that vaping is less harmful than smoking cannabis. Cannabis can be vaped for recreational or medical purposes, which involves vaping cannabinoids such as CBD or THC or a combination of both.

THC is the primary compound that produces effects of “euphoric high,” whereas CBD is nonpsychoactive and does not produce any intoxicating effects. The rising popularity of cannabis vaping has raised health concerns because people who vape cannabis are increasingly preferring products with higher potency, such as oils and concentrates, instead of traditional cannabis flower. The use of highly potent products is particularly concerning as it can increase the risk of acute adverse effects on psychomotor and cognitive functions and mental health. Prolonged use of high-THC products also increases the risk of cannabis use disorder, compared with smoking dried cannabis. Because adolescent neurodevelopment continues until approximately 25 years of age, adolescents and young adults are more vulnerable to the effects of vaping cannabis, including impairments in executive functioning and cognition, which may extend into adulthood.

In the United States, although cannabis is not legally accessible to youths under age 21, 11.2% of adolescents (12–17 years) used cannabis in the past year, with 63.4% vaping it, whereas 36.5% of young adults (18–25 years) reported using cannabis in the past year, with 52.2% vaping it in 2023 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024).

Vaping cannabis is perceived to be safer than smoking because the lack of combustion results in reduced exposure to carcinogens and toxicants. However, various toxic substances, such as polyethylene glycols, medium-chain triglycerides, and vitamin E acetate, have been found in cannabis vaping products. The addition of vitamin E acetate was responsible for the outbreak of e-cigarette-, or vaping-, associated product-use lung injury (EVALI), which resulted in over 68 deaths and more than 2,500 hospitalizations between 2019 and 2020 in the United States.

Adolescents who were male, older, non-Hispanic White, and currently using alcohol or tobacco had higher odds of vaping cannabis. Findings highlighted the need to tailor prevention initiatives for these populations and to conduct further research on the association between cannabis vaping and mental health disorders.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about cannabis use—especially in youth as their brains are developing. The Coalition is conducting a prevention awareness campaign entitled “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE; Underage Marijuana Use,” to educate and update the community regarding marijuana use and its negative consequences. To learn more please about the Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE’s website to learn more about Cannabis/Marijuana use at www.safeglencove.org.