
Statement of Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative®

New Government Reports Show Encouraging Decline in Youth E-Cigarette Use As Menthol and Flavored Disposable E-Cigarettes Use Rise Significantly Reinforcing Need For Stronger and Urgent Federal Policy Free of Tobacco Industry Interference As Youth Vaping Remains at Epidemic Levels

Two new reports published earlier today by the FDA and CDC show that while youth e-cigarette use decreased in a meaningful way, it remains at epidemic levels driven by a dramatic increase in the use of menthol and disposable e-cigarettes, two categories of products exempted from federal restrictions. The decline in youth e-cigarette use is good news but the deeper story is quite troubling. We still have millions of kids vaping and at risk of addiction and becoming tobacco consumers for life. These reports make clear that unless stronger federal policies are put in place immediately—policies that are free of the loopholes that allowed for menthol and flavored disposable sales to soar—this progress is at risk of being reversed or significantly slowed. Today’s data provide a road map to how we get to a more rapid and permanent solution to end the youth e-cigarette epidemic – we must eliminate all flavors, including menthol which is a flavor, and put an end to cheap, disposable products that are largely aimed at youth. The data also point to the urgent need to help youth addicted to these high nicotine products, which is exactly what our digital youth directed e-cigarette quit program, This Is Quitting, is doing with 200,000 young people now enrolled.

With the e-cigarette application deadline today, the FDA and Administration have a window of opportunity to accelerate progress by clearing the market of all flavors in all product types unless and until they are proven to **not** put young American's health at risk. The only way to stop the appeal of e-cigarettes to kids is to get rid of all flavors full stop and to end “cherry picking” by individual flavors, device type or any other criteria that kids and more importantly the industry will find the loophole to exploit.

Taken together, the [2020 National Youth Tobacco Survey \(NYTS\)](#) and the new [e-cigarette sales data report](#) illustrate how the current federal policy enabled youth to quickly migrate to menthol e-cigarettes (especially JUUL menthol pods) when mint-flavored products were removed from the marketplace, and for inexpensive, flavored disposable e-cigarettes such as Puff Bar to soar in popularity. With kid magnet names like cotton candy and banana ice, the market share of disposable products nearly doubled in just 10 months from August 2019 to May 2020. Likewise, during this same period, pre-filled cartridge sales known as pods that were menthol increased from 10.7% to a whopping 61.8%, completely replacing sales of mint-flavored cartridges which fell from 47.6% to 0.3%.



Today's NYTS numbers show 19.6% of America's high school students continue to use e-cigarettes, nearly forty percent of whom (38.9%) do so on a regular basis. Concerns about the nation's youth vaping crisis continue to mount as the evidence base grows. A new Truth Initiative study on the association between e-cigarette use and future combustible cigarette use published in *Addictive Behaviors* in August 2020 finds young people between 15-27 who had ever used e-cigarettes in 2018 had 7X higher odds of ever using cigarettes and 8X higher odds of currently using cigarettes one year later in 2019, compared with those who had never used an e-cigarette. According to research from the Stanford University School of Medicine, young people who reported ever using e-cigarettes were up to five times more likely to test positive with COVID-19 compared to their non-vaping peers. Those who reported both e-cigarette and cigarette use in the past 30 days were nearly seven times more likely to receive a positive test result and were also almost five times more likely to experience COVID-19-related symptoms compared to those who had never vaped or smoked.

Simply put, we cannot and should not be satisfied with policies that are currently in place if we want to end this epidemic before a significant portion of our youth become addicted to nicotine for life. The youth e-cigarette epidemic should have never happened in the first place. Now, we must use these important data to reverse it as rapidly as possible. For its part, Truth Initiative continues to combat the youth e-cigarette epidemic head-on with its proven-effective truth anti-vaping education and prevention national campaign, evidenced-based research, youth activism, and its first-of-its kind text-based quit program, *This is Quitting*.

The study on e-cigarette sales was published in the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) with research and support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Truth Initiative, CDC Foundation, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. The data are from Information Resources, Inc., which includes data from convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores, drug stores/pharmacies, mass merchandiser outlets, retail store chains, club stores, dollar stores, and military sales. Sales from the internet and tobacco-specialty stores, including vape shops, are not included.

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