



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

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Berrien County Health Department Raising Awareness About Dangers of Underage Vaping and Tobacco Use

Benton Harbor, Michigan, Jan. 11, 2023 – The Berrien County Health Department’s substance use disorder prevention team is bringing awareness to the dangers of underage vaping and tobacco use this winter.

The Health Department’s “Escape the Vape” campaign seeks to educate community members younger than 21 about the negative effects of vaping and tobacco use and to discourage them from using tobacco products. The initiative also provides resources for parents and other adults to talk with kids about vaping and tobacco.

E-cigarettes are the most common type of tobacco product used by teens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 50% of Michigan high school students in 2019 reported they had tried e-cigarettes in their lifetime and 21% reported using electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days. The 2021-2022 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth found more than 1 in 7 Berrien County teens had used an e-cigarette in the past month.

E-cigarettes, or vapes, are electronic devices that heat a liquid and produce an aerosol or mix of small particles in the air. Most are composed of a battery, a heating element and a place to hold liquid. They come in a variety of sizes and may be shaped like everyday items, such as a flash drive or pens, sometimes making them difficult to spot.

Due to the composition and variety of flavors of e-cigarettes, many young people – as much as 63% – do not know they contain nicotine.

Though research is still new, it is believed individuals who vape expose themselves to a variety of health risks that won't be fully understood for years. Some of the negative side effects already known include:

- Increased likelihood of nicotine addiction.
- Effects on memory, mood and attention.
- Increased risk of lung disease and worsened symptoms for lung conditions such as asthma.
- Increased risk of cancer, high blood pressure and heart attack.
- Greater levels of anxiety and depression.
- Risk of severe burns and injury from device malfunction.

"E-cigarettes are marketed specifically toward young people with sleek designs and a variety of popular flavors like mint and cotton candy," said Lisa Peeples-Hurst, public health promotion and prevention supervisor. "That doesn't change the danger these substances pose to young people in our community. A conversation with the teens in your life can go a long way toward protecting them from the dangerous impact of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products."

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, parents can help reduce their child's risk by talking with them about vaping and the risks involved. SAMHSA has [resources available](#) to help parents and other adults start conversations with underage people in their life about tobacco and other substances.

For more information about preventing underage vaping and tobacco use, visit bit.ly/EscapeTheVape or contact Lisa Peeples-Hurst at lpeepleshurst@bchdmi.org or 269.927.5690.

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