

Is Vaping a Healthy Alternative to Tobacco Use? Not Exactly

While e-cigarettes do not contain tobacco, they negatively affect oral and overall health

SEATTLE – Nov. 15, 2023 – Since the federal government raised the minimum age for purchasing tobacco to 21 years old in 2019, tobacco usage is down across the board in all age groups. Which is good news for the health of all Americans.

What is not good news, however, is a surge in vaping, especially among teenagers whose use of e-cigarettes has reversed a two-decade decline among youth who made attempts to quit nicotine and failed, according to a [Monitoring the Future study](#).

While the harmful effect of tobacco use is widely known, dentists also point to the oral health impacts of vaping -- the act of smoking an e-cigarette. Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes are inhaled using an aerosol – or vapor – to dispense nicotine.

“Most people know nicotine is bad for your overall health and that smoking can discolor your teeth, but what they may not know is nicotine restricts blood vessels which reduces blood flow to the teeth and gums,” said Kyle Dosch, DDS, Delta Dental of Washington’s dental director and member dentist. “With reduced blood flow, your gums don’t get the oxygen and nutrients needed to stay healthy. In addition to gum disease, unhealthy gums can lead to other dental problems like tooth sensitivity, cavities and even tooth loss.”

As with cigarette smoking, vaping is highly addictive and contributes to dry mouth, bacteria, bruxism and tooth damage, which can cause chronic bad breath, red, irritated or bleeding gums, tender or swollen gums, loose teeth or complete loss of teeth.

Recent studies have also shown that nicotine promotes tumor growth in several types of cancer, and vaping has negative effects on lungs, blood cells, immune systems and increases the risk of heart disease. Amongst adolescents, nicotine can also [affect brain development](#) and prime it for future substance use.

While vaping is a recent invention, it is not a healthier alternative to smoking cigarettes. It can be beneficial for some adults to quit smoking tobacco products, but the health risks should not be ignored, and parents of teenagers should be helping their children understand the risks of vaping. Washington state has strict laws regarding vaping, especially among minors. Anyone under the age of 21 is not allowed to purchase or possess vaping products, a license is required for businesses selling e-cigarettes and vaping is not allowed in childcare facilities, schools, school buses, elevators or outdoor areas within 500 feet of schools or childcare facilities.

For more information about your oral health, visit Delta Dental of Washington’s [blog](#).

About Delta Dental of Washington

Founded 70 years ago by Seattle area dentists who set out to revolutionize oral health care, an innovative program was developed to provide longshoremens’ children access to dental care – and the concept of dental benefits was born. Today [Delta Dental of Washington](#), a not-for-profit, is the state’s leading dental benefits provider covering nearly 4 million people statewide and beyond.

Through corporate philanthropy, oral health advocacy, and funding the [Arcora Foundation](#), Delta Dental of Washington plays a vital role in making dental care more equitable and accessible, increasing dental health education with an emphasis on youth, and expanding diversity at all levels within the dental profession. These collective efforts aim to improve oral health care in Washington so all people can enjoy good oral and overall health with no one left behind. Delta Dental of Washington is part of the Delta Dental Plans Association, consisting of 39 independent, affiliated member companies. For more information, visit: www.deltadentalwa.com.

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