

Vaping Marijuana

Clear and Present Dangers



Vaping of marijuana is not the same as smoking it. Vaping marijuana involves inhaling a highly concentrated form of marijuana that has a much higher psychological and physical effect than plant marijuana.¹

Vaping is especially popular among adolescents. In fact, vaping marijuana among teens more than doubled from 2018 to 2019 with nearly 21% of high school seniors admitting to it.² Students are even vaping marijuana in school. Why? Simply because they can.

The devices used for vaping are small enough to fit in a hoodie, pocket, and even go undetected in class. Known as vapes, e-cigarettes, e-hookahs, and mods, these devices resemble cigarettes, pipes, pens, and even USB flash drives. And, unlike a marijuana cigarette, the concentrate itself is smokeless with no telltale odor.

How Vaping Works

Vaping devices use a battery and cartridge and a combustion process to heat a liquid concentrate. The heated concentrate then produces an aerosol that the user can inhale into the lungs. Commonly known as e-juice, vape juice, or vape liquid, people who are around someone who's vaping also can breathe in the aerosol when it's exhaled into the air.

The vapor produced by the vaping process is not, as many believe, "just water." Most of the liquids that are vaped contain – and release – a variety of substances, some of which are toxic. Liquids that can be vaped include marijuana concentrates, nicotine, flavorings, additives, or a combination of these. Dry herb vape devices do not use combustion or additional liquids; instead, they heat dry marijuana.

Plant vs. Concentrate

Marijuana is a federally illegal, psychoactive drug that contains a compound known as tetrahydrocannabinol or THC. THC is the mind-altering compound known for producing a euphoric high. Levels of

Daily Vaping by Teens

Marijuana continues to be the most commonly used illicit drug by young people. In a national survey among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, researchers found near daily marijuana vaping reported as follows:⁴

3.5%
12th graders

3.0%
10th graders

0.8%
8th graders

THC in plant marijuana typically range from 15-24%, which is much higher than it was 25 years ago.

Though there is no average level for THC in marijuana concentrates, they do contain very high levels. One school resource officer confiscated a vaping product that tested at a level 83.6% THC.³ Such high potencies can lead to medical emergencies or even death.

Deadly Lung Injury

In 2019, the CDC, FDA, and health departments nationwide began investigating a severe and deadly outbreak of vaping-related lung injury dubbed EVALI (E-cigarette, or Vaping, product use-Associated Lung Injury). Nearly 3,000 people were hospitalized and 68 deaths have been confirmed.

National and state data from patient reports and tested samples linked THC-containing products to most EVALI cases. Vitamin E acetate also was strongly linked to the outbreak. As a result, the CDC issued several recommendations, among them these for teens:⁵

- **DON'T** use THC-containing vaping products, particularly from informal sources like friends, family, or in-person or online dealers.
- **DON'T** add Vitamin E acetate to any vaping products.
- **DON'T** use vaping products (nicotine- or THC-containing) ever, if you are a youth, young adult, or pregnant woman.

About This Campaign

Because much of the public conversation surrounding marijuana has been based on anecdotes rather than science, Prevention Action Alliance and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services created this campaign to help people better understand the facts about marijuana and its effects.

If you found this article helpful, we encourage you to share it with others. You can also find other fact sheets about marijuana at: preventionactionalliance.org/marijuana

If you have concerns about your own use of marijuana or a loved one's, and wish to seek help, go to: findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

Contact Us

For more information on marijuana, please contact us at:
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About Us

Prevention
Action Alliance



Prevention Action Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit located in Columbus, Ohio. We're dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Learn more at preventionactionalliance.org.

The mission of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is to provide statewide leadership on the topics of mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery. Learn more about OhioMHAS at mha.ohio.gov.

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