



Elko County Health Officer

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September 16, 2019

Dear Parent or Guardian,

E-cigarette use is becoming increasingly popular among middle and high school students. In fact, e-cigarette use has become an epidemic among our nation's youth. As you may already be aware, a multi-state outbreak of severe pulmonary disease associated with e-cigarette product use is under investigation. It is important that we take aggressive steps to protect our children from products that are exposing a new generation of young people to nicotine.

E-cigarettes are electronic devices that heat liquid and produce an aerosol or mix of small particles in the air. These devices come in many shapes and sizes and can look like regular cigarettes, cigars, or pipes. Some can even look like USB flash drives, pens, and other everyday items. E-cigarettes are known by many different names. They are sometimes called "e-cigs," "e-hookahs," "mods," "vape pens," "vapes," "tank systems" and "electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)."

Unfortunately, one major misconception among teenagers is that e-cigarettes are harmless. E-cigarette aerosol is NOT harmless. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is an addictive drug. Nicotine exposure during adolescence can harm the developing brain, which continues to develop until around the age of 25. Many e-cigarettes also come in kid-friendly flavors. This makes e-cigarettes more appealing to young people, but the chemicals used to make certain flavors can also be a health risk. Additionally, in 2016, one-third of U.S. middle and high school students who ever used e-cigarettes had also used marijuana products in e-cigarettes.

Parents have a very important role to play in addressing this epidemic. The Surgeon General recommends parents do the following:

- Learn about the different shapes and types of e-cigarettes and the risks of all forms of e-cigarette use for young people.
- Set a good example by being tobacco-free. If you use tobacco, it is never too late to quit. For free help visit <https://smokefree.gov/> or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- Adopt tobacco-free rules, including e-cigarettes, in your home and vehicle.
- Talk to your child or teen about why e-cigarettes are harmful for them. It is never too late.
- Get the Surgeon General's tip sheet for parents, "Talk With Your Teen About E-cigarettes", at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/>.
- Let your child know that you want them to stay away from all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, because they are not safe for them.
- Set up an appointment with your child's healthcare provider so that they can hear from a medical professional about the health risks of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.
- Speak to your child's teacher and school administrator about enforcement of tobacco-free school policies and tobacco prevention curriculum.
- Encourage your child to learn the facts and get tips for quitting tobacco products at <https://teen.smokefree.gov/>.

We appreciate your collaboration in protecting the health of our youth. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at 775-738-4375.

Regards,

Dr. Bryce Putnam
Elko County Health Officer