

Media release

Parents say no to e-cigarettes for teens, poll finds

Australian parents are calling for tougher restrictions on e-cigarettes in an effort to reduce uptake in teens, as research shows half of parents support a total ban on the supply, sale and use of all products in Australia.

[The Royal Children's Hospital \(RCH\) National Child Health Poll](#) on e-cigarettes and vaping found the overwhelming majority of parents (87 per cent) support a ban on marketing and advertising of e-cigarettes that targets teenagers, and 78 per cent endorse advertising bans on social media. More than half (58 per cent) support a ban of flavoured e-cigarettes, recognising that flavoured products increase uptake among teens.

Health harms and safety are also front of mind for parents with 87 per cent calling for childproof packaging to be mandatory in an effort to reduce accidental poisoning. Close to nine in 10 parents (84 per cent) are asking for health warnings on packaging and the introduction of compulsory safety testing of all e-cigarette products by manufacturers (88 per cent).

Almost half of parents (48 per cent) misbelieve that if e-cigarettes caused health problems, the government would have banned them by now, and two thirds (66 per cent) were not aware that e-cigarette products currently sold in Australia are not subject to testing or approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Poll Director, Paediatrician Dr Anthea Rhodes, said "This study shows that many parents believe that if a product is legal it must be safe. E-cigarettes are not safe for teenagers and efforts should be made to educate people about the risks."

"It is clear from these findings that parents want regulations in relation to e-cigarettes revisited. Our findings strongly support government efforts to improve the safety of these products, and restrict access to our teens and young people in particular."

The poll of 2029 parents caring for 3638 children also found that while there has been increasing media attention and health campaigning surrounding these products, a concerning number of parents are still unaware of how dangerous these products can be:

- One in three parents (31 per cent) don't know that e-cigarettes contain toxins and chemicals and 40 per cent are unaware that e-cigarettes can cause death
- Almost half (43 per cent) are unaware that e-cigarette liquid can be toxic if swallowed
- A third (37 per cent) are under the misconception that e-cigarettes must be safe because they are used to help people quit smoking

"The health harms of e-cigarettes are real. These products contain a multitude of toxins and chemicals, and they are still new so the full extent of their potential harm is not yet known. Recent cases around the world have shown us that using e-cigarettes can have devastating impacts on the health of teenagers and young people. More than 60 people worldwide have now died from vaping related lung injury and thousands more have become very sick," Dr Rhodes said.

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“Vaporised e-cigarette liquid sold in Australia often contains nicotine, even when the label says it doesn’t. This highly addictive substance affects the developing adolescent brain and may lead teens to experiment with other tobacco products and drugs.”

The RCH Poll found the majority of parents (73 per cent) are concerned their teen might try e-cigarettes yet more than half of parents (57 per cent) have never discussed e-cigarette use with their teen. Most parents have however discussed smoking regular cigarettes (71 per cent), alcohol and drinking (81 per cent) and other drug use (81 per cent), suggesting that parents are yet to see e-cigarettes as common place risky behaviour.

“Talking to teens about risky behaviours is a really important way for parents to help keep their child safe. Having a conversation about e-cigarettes with your child will not only help educate them, but help parents to develop an honest line of communication and encourage children to share their concerns,” Dr Rhodes said.

“We are seeing the popularity of e-cigarette products begin to infiltrate Australia at an alarming rate. Education on the risks is crucial to support parents and teenagers to have informed discussions and assist their decision making.

“It’s time to revisit the regulation of e-cigarettes and related products, if we are to avoid an epidemic of vaping related health harms in Australia.”

Visit rchpoll.org.au to read the full Poll report ‘E-cigarettes, vaping and teens: Do parents know the dangers?’ and to access additional resources including information for parents and teens.