

The Government Grapples with Vaping

A brawl is brewing between government regulators and the manufacturer of the best-selling e-cigarettes in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has agreed to pause its ban on products from vaping company Juul while the government reviews the company's electronic cigarettes.

The FDA had banned the marketing and sales of all vaping products produced by the company, a decision that was appealed by Juul, yet applauded by health care professionals.

“Why would we inhale anything in our lungs except good clean air?” remarks Dr. Patrick Whitten, an OSF HealthCare pulmonologist in Peoria, IL. “So it's just yet another step in the right direction to try to get people not to put anything in their lungs this damaging.”

The FDA claims Juul's application for authorization lacks enough details about the chemical makeup of its vaping formulas, and doesn't significantly prove that its e-cigarettes help adult smokers quit or reduce their smoking.

Another concern of government regulators and health care providers alike is the increase in teen and adolescent vaping, and what Juul Labs, which is owned by Altria Group Inc., the maker of Marlboro cigarettes, is doing to prevent it.

“The cigarette companies realize that it's important for them to get people hooked on these products because cigarettes kill people and if they kill their consumer, they have to replace that consumer or else they don't have a business model,” says Dr. Whitten. “So this despicable business model is to get younger smokers or younger people hooked on their products to continue to use. If they don't replace their consumers that they're killing off, they have no business.”

As the battle between the FDA and Juul continues in the courtroom, Dr. Whitten urges parents to be proactive at home.

At high doses, nicotine can cause dizziness and vomiting. Users who refill their own cartridges are especially at risk for unsafe levels of the drug. Even more concerning, young children have been poisoned after coming in contact with the nicotine-containing liquid. Teens who use e-cigarettes may become addicted to nicotine, which can harm their developing brain. There's also concern they may start smoking regular cigarettes.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021, about 1 out of every 35 middle school students and 1 of every 9 high school students reported that they had used electronic cigarettes in the [past 30 days](#).

Dr. Whitten says a parent's open and honest communication with their kids can help pave the way to a smoke and vape-free future.

“Education is the key here,” he explains. “We can all learn things from each other, right? So even for our own kids, who we think are not going to be doing things like vaping, information is so important. So *why* they shouldn't do things like that. So it's good to have that open dialogue between the parents and the kids.”

When it comes to both vaping and smoking, the top takeaway, according to Dr. Whitten, is to not start. And if you are a smoker to quit. He says it's never too late – even for life long smokers.

“It's never, never too late to quit. When someone quits smoking, even within hours, some of the respiratory cells start to heal themselves a little bit. And you do reduce your risk for lung cancer over time. It's not back to zero, but you do decrease some of that risk if you quit smoking.”

For help quitting smoking, speak with your primary care physician. OSF HealthCare also offers structured programs to help individuals who want to quit. To learn more visit [osfhealthcare.org](https://www.osfhealthcare.org) and search “smoking cessation.”