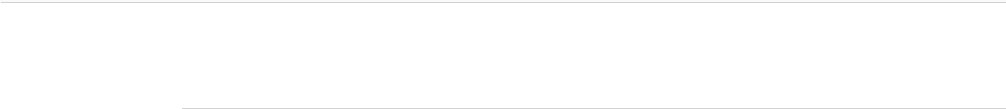


Teen e-cigarette a possible gateway to smoking, researcher says



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By **Caroline Chen, Bloomberg News**
Bloomberg

11:20 p.m. CST, March 6, 2014

NEW YORK — E-cigarettes facing municipal bans and scrutiny by U.S. regulators received a new slap on the wrist from scientists: A report Thursday suggests the devices may be a gateway to old-fashioned, cancer-causing smokes for teens.

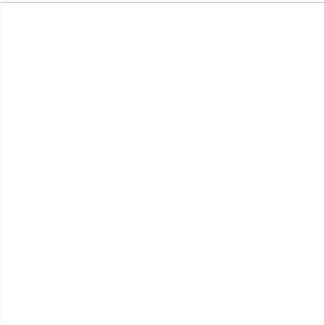
Youths who reported ever using an e-cigarette had six times the odds of smoking a traditional cigarette than those who never tried the device, according to a study published Thursday in the journal JAMA Pediatrics. E-cigarette use didn't stop young smokers from partaking in regular cigarettes as well.

The global market for e-cigarettes may top \$5 billion this year, according to Euromonitor International estimates. Makers of the devices, including Altria Group Inc., the largest U.S. tobacco company, market them online and on TV, where traditional tobacco ads are banned, and some have added flavors such as bubble gum to the nicotine vapor that may have extra appeal for youths. That allure is why the Food and Drug Administration needs to restrict the devices, anti-smoking advocates say.

"The FDA needs to act now," Vince Willmore, spokesman for the Washington-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said in a telephone interview. "We think it's overdue."

Concerns about underage use of e-cigarettes were raised last year when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta reported that use of the devices by youths doubled in 2012 from a year earlier.

"E-cigarettes are likely to be gateway devices for nicotine addiction among youth, opening up a whole new market for tobacco," said Lauren Dutra, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California at San Francisco and the report's lead author. "We're most worried about nicotine addiction initiation in youth."



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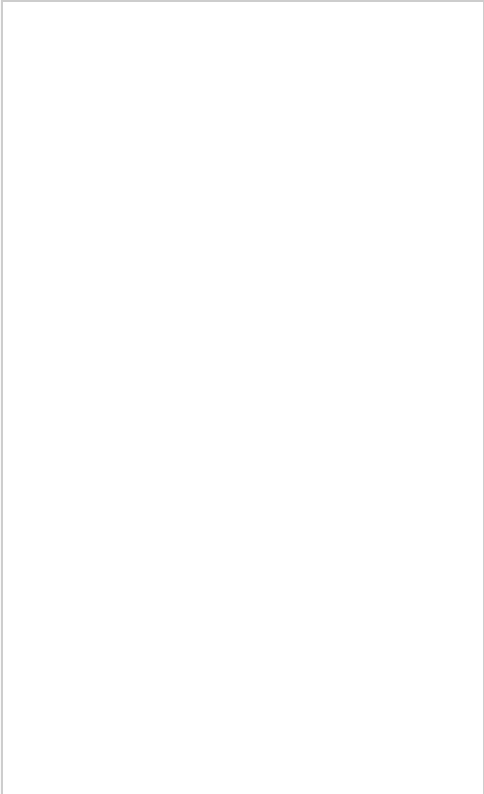


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E-cigarettes "are enticing for kids," said Donovan Robinson, dean of students at Chicago's Lincoln Park High School. He said Thursday's findings weren't surprising. "They'll say, 'Hey, now let's try the real thing.' "

Children in middle and high school, the target of the research, don't think about health consequences, he said.

"Everything is a fad with teenagers," Robinson said. They use e-cigarettes "because it looks cool. Teenagers see somebody doing something cool, and they want to do it."

The latest research analyzed data from the 2011 and 2012 National Youth Tobacco Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Almost 40,000 middle and high school students from about 200 schools across the U.S. participated in the survey. Students were asked about their frequency of use of e-cigarettes, conventional cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and other tobacco products.

While battery-powered e-cigarettes enable the ingestion of heated nicotine, users avoid the tars, arsenic and other chemicals common in tobacco products that have been linked to cancer, supporters have said.

The study Thursday shows correlation, not causation, said Cynthia Cabrera, executive director of Smoke-Free Alternatives Trade Association, the Washington-based e-cigarette association.

"I've yet to see any science that shows there's a gateway effect," Cabrera said in a telephone interview. "We want to work with facts and science, we don't want to make knee-jerk decisions based on emotional responses."

Cabrera warned against drawing inferences on teen use based on the use of flavors in e-cigarettes.

"We do know that thousands of people were able to switch over to vapor products because of the flavors," she said in a telephone interview. "Would we deny people who were in a group who could die from tobacco to use flavors that helped them get off killer tobacco?"

Opponents have countered that nicotine alone is so toxic it's been used in the past as a pesticide. They say the health effects of nicotine, which has proven to be habit forming, are unclear and deserve more study. Until that's done, they've said, advertising of the devices should be closely monitored to make sure it isn't aimed at underage smokers.

"We're concerned that the marketing for e-cigarettes risks re-glamorizing smoking" among youths who won't make the distinction between electronic and conventional cigarettes, Willmore said.

In December, a billboard in Miami used Santa Claus to market e-cigarettes and in the recent Sports Illustrated bathing suit issue there was an ad for one of the devices "right in the middle of a bikini bottom," he said.

"You couldn't design an ad more appealing to a teenage boy," Willmore said.

This is expected to a pivotal year for producers of electronic cigarettes, with all major tobacco companies either launching new products or expanding their e-cigarette sales exposure, said Kenneth Shea, a Bloomberg analyst. Altria, Reynolds American Inc. and Lorillard Inc. are all expected to pursue U.S. exposure for their e-cigarettes, while closely held Logic Technology Development and Sottera, the maker of the e-cigarette NJoy, try to



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keep pace, Shea wrote in a report this month.

While tobacco companies have been under the FDA's watchful eye since Congress gave the agency authority over the \$90 billion industry in 2009, e-cigarettes haven't been subject to the same oversight. The agency is now in the process of readying new rules for the industry designed to establish clear manufacturing standards and set boundaries for how the products can be marketed.

Federal regulators aren't the only government officials moving to control use of e-cigarettes. On March 4, the Los Angeles City Council voted to join New York and Chicago in banning the use of the electronic products in in workplaces, restaurants and many public areas.

The municipal restrictions were criticized by Miguel Martin, president of Logic Technology, the second-largest independent e-cigarette maker in the U.S. Localities should wait for the FDA to make its views known before taking action, Martin said in an interview before the council vote.

"I find it odd that everybody looks to the FDA for guidance on everything else, but because it's politically expedient, they don't on this," Martin said.

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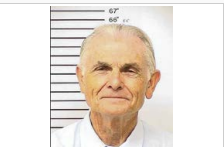
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