

Friday 28 May 2021

NEW CAMPAIGN AIMS TO TACKLE TEEN VAPING ON CENTRAL COAST

Central Coast Local Health District has launched a campaign to combat the growing problem of vaping amongst teenagers on the Central Coast.

Say No to Vaping aims to raise awareness of the health risks young people are exposing themselves to by using electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes).

The awareness drive coincides with World No Tobacco Day (Monday 31 May) and highlights how e-cigarettes are not only addictive, but contain harmful chemicals and toxins that can cause some of the same serious health problems as smoking tobacco.

As part of the campaign, information and resources will be provided to local schools and community organisations who work with young people.

Data on teenage vaping in 2017 indicated one in five students aged 16 to 17 years old had used an e-cigarette, while nearly one in 10 students aged 12 to 15 had used one.¹

There are fears this number is growing and Dr Lyndon Bauer, a local GP and health promotion officer at Central Coast Local Health District, hopes the campaign will help debunk some of the myths around vaping.

“We know from engaging regularly with Central Coast high schools and community groups that vaping is a rapidly emerging issue for them,” Dr Bauer said.

“Part of this problem stems from a number of myths around e-cigarettes that they’re harmless and less addictive - this is simply not true.

“Many e-cigarettes produce or emit vapour containing chemicals and toxins such as formaldehyde and heavy metals that can cause serious lung damage and even cancer. They can also contain large amounts of nicotine, the same highly-addictive chemical that’s in regular cigarettes,” Dr Bauer added

E-cigarettes are battery-powered and can look like everyday items like pens, highlighters, asthma pumps, lipsticks or USB memory sticks, as well as traditional cigarettes, cigars or pipes.

They have cartridges filled with a liquid that typically contains nicotine, flavourings and other chemicals. This liquid is heated by the battery, producing a vapour that the user inhales, hence the term “vaping”.

¹ www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/e-cigarette-young-people.aspx

“Because of their sweet flavours, e-cigarettes make it easy for teens to put large amounts of nicotine into their body without even realising it,” Dr Bauer said.

“This is not good for a young person. Nicotine can affect brain development in teens, impacting their learning, concentration and mood, causing anxiety and depression.

“Putting nicotine into your body also increases your risk of other types of addiction in later life.”

In NSW, it is illegal to sell e-cigarettes or e-cigarette accessories to a person under 18 years of age, while it is illegal to sell e-cigarettes containing nicotine to all ages. Retailers can be prosecuted after having products seized and can be fined up to \$1,100 per offence.

It is also illegal to use e-cigarettes in places where smoking is illegal, such as outdoor play areas, public swimming pools, public transport and outdoor dining areas.

In 2020-21, the NSW Government is investing \$17.3 million on tobacco and e-cigarette control. This includes public awareness and education campaigns, quit smoking support, compliance and enforcement of strong smoke-free and retailing laws, and targeted programs for vulnerable groups with high smoking rates.

For more information about the *Say No to Vaping* campaign and to access resources, visit www.healthpromotion.com.au/SayNoToVaping

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