



Concern over teens getting high using e-cigarettes

Various illegal substances can be added to cylinder, anti-smoking group says

Reported by **Jeff Frankel** on Apr 9, 2014, 5:42 pm

Teenagers using electronic cigarettes – sometimes to get high – has one New Jersey anti-teen smoking advocate worried.

Middle school and high school students are reportedly pouring marijuana extract into e-cigarettes to get high. Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of GASP – the Global Advisors Smokefree Policy – in Summit, said she hasn't heard of the new trend but isn't stunned by it.

“Any type of substance can be added to the device, so it's unfortunately not surprising,” she said. “It's very disconcerting that these products are being used to intake illicit drugs.”

More teens are using e-cigarettes. In one year, e-cigarette use doubled among middle and high school students, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

E-cigarettes are thin, cylindrical devices that heat a liquid nicotine solution that users inhale. Unlike regular cigarettes, they don't emit smoke or tar, but there is debate over whether the vapor is clean or laden with chemicals.

The devices aren't regulated by the federal government, but they are controlled by New Jersey's strict smoking laws.

In January 2010, then-Gov. Jon Corzine signed legislation banning the use of e-cigarettes in public spaces and workplaces, and barring e-cigarette sales to people 18 years old and younger.

It was the first state law of its kind in the nation, with the New Jersey Senate and Assembly both voting unanimously in favor of the law, according to GASP.

New Jersey's teens are slightly less likely to smoke in general than teens elsewhere in the U.S., according to a 2011 study by the federal Health and Human Services Department.

Nationwide, 18 percent of high school students smoked at least one cigarette in the month prior to when the study was conducted, while in New Jersey that number was 16 percent of students, with males smoking a little more than females, according to the study.

E-cigarettes and liquid refill containers featuring bright colors, sweet-smelling flavors and dangerous doses of nicotine are generating rising numbers of emergency calls to poison control centers around the nation, a CDC study published today says.

The number of e-cigarette exposure calls per month to poison centers rose from one per month in September 2010 to 215 per month in February of this year, the CDC found.

“Recent studies have come out to show that electronic smoking can be hazardous to your health,” said Blumenfeld, the director of GASP. “Any type of smoking is banned on school property, kindergarten to 12 [grade]. In New Jersey, it’s unlawful to sell any tobacco or devices to 19-year-olds. The burden is on the seller.”

In New York, a smokers' advocacy group says it has sued the city in an attempt to overturn a ban on electronic cigarettes wherever cigarettes are banned. The NYC Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment announced the lawsuit Tuesday.

Blumenfeld's group is responsible for helping other states draft smoking bans.

“We’re hopeful that other locales will create policies that will restrict the use of electronic smoking devices in public and private places,” she said.

Email the reporter: jfrankel@fios1news.com

<http://www.fios1news.com/newjersey/node/25394#.U0bySF51XR0>