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MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

Youth smoking falling faster than ever since vaping, study finds

The long-term decline in smoking rates in youth and young adults in the US has ACCELERATED since vaping became popular in 2014, according to a [new study](#) published today in the journal Tobacco Control.

The study combined the data from five large population surveys of 15-25 year-olds and found that the smoking rate in 15-21 year-olds in the US fell three times faster since 2014 compared to the long-term trend prior to that. The fall in smoking in 22-24 year-olds was twice the long-term trend.

‘The most plausible explanation for this unprecedented change is the uptake of vaping’, said Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, Chairman of the health promotion charity, the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association.

‘It is very likely that vaping is acting as a far less risky diversion from smoking for many young people who would have otherwise smoked. Some young people who smoke are also using vaping to quit’ he said. ‘As vaping is at least 95% less harmful than smoking, this is a big win for public health.’

The study authors considered whether other tobacco control strategies could explain the dramatic decline in youth smoking, such as youth education programs, price rises and smoke-free air laws. They concluded that these strategies were likely to be responsible for only a small part of the decline at most.

The findings also challenge the relevance of the so-called ‘gateway theory’ which claims that vaping is leading young people to take up smoking. If a gateway to smoking exists, it must be trivial.

‘While there are likely to be some young people who take up smoking as a result of vaping, this effect must be negligible and is swamped by the positive impact of vaping’ said Dr Mendelsohn.

Vaping is not advised for young people, especially non-smokers, however the reality is that young people will experiment with novel or risky products. Most use in young people is experimental and short-lived and is mainly in current smokers or those who would otherwise have smoked. Regular use by never smokers is rare.

‘This is really good news for public health’ Dr Mendelsohn said. ‘We know vaping has helped many millions of adults to quit smoking. Studies like this in large populations suggest it is also reducing youth smoking. That is a win-win for public health.’

Two out of three long-term smokers die prematurely from a smoking-related disease. Anything that helps to reduce smoking rates is a good thing, ‘Dr Mendelsohn said. ‘There is growing evidence that vaping will make a valuable contribution to lowering the devastating toll of death and disease from smoking.’

ENDS

Reference

Levy D, Warner KE, Cummings KM, Hammond D, Kuo C, Fong GT, Trasher JF, Goniewicz ML, Borland R. Examining the relationship of vaping to smoking initiation among US youth and young adults. Tobacco Control 2018

Available at <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2018/10/31/tobaccocontrol-2018-054446>

Full copy [here](#)

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What is ATHRA?

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA) is a registered health promotion charity established to reduce the harm from tobacco smoking in Australia. ATHRA aims to raise awareness of less harmful alternatives for adult smokers who are otherwise unable to quit. ATHRA's broader goal is to encourage the complete cessation of tobacco smoking in Australia. For more information, visit www.athra.org.au.

ATHRA is funded by unconditional donations from businesses and the general public. It does not accept donations from tobacco companies or their subsidiaries.

None of the directors has ever had any financial or commercial relationship with any electronic cigarette or tobacco company.

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ATHRA is registered as a charity with the
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