



NEEDHAM BOARD OF HEALTH



December 11, 2019

Protecting Community Health in Needham—E-Cigarettes and Vaping

Why is vaping a concern?

A recent surge in severe respiratory illnesses is driven by the use of vaping and electronic cigarette products. As of November 20, 2019, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had confirmed 2,290 confirmed and probable injury cases, and 47 deaths, predominantly among teenagers and young adults. In MA, as of December 4th, there are 90 confirmed and probable cases of vaping related lung disease.

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol produced by an e-cigarette or similar battery-powered device that simulates the action and sensation of smoking. E-cigarettes produce an aerosol, commonly called vapor. The aerosol can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including: ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs; flavoring such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease; volatile organic compounds; cancer-causing chemicals; and heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead. Further, e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance, and the vaporization process makes it even easier to become addicted.

E-cigarettes recently surpassed conventional cigarettes as the most commonly used tobacco product among youth. Use of e-cigarettes by youth is of concern because young people are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of nicotine. The US Surgeon General has found that nicotine exposure during adolescence may have lasting consequences for brain development. The risk of nicotine addiction is particularly high among those under age 21; moreover, addiction to nicotine is what keeps young people smoking even after adolescence.

There is evidence that manufacturers of e-cigarettes have specifically targeted younger users in their advertising, especially with flavored products that are popular with teens and young adults. Here in Needham, we know, per the 2018 biennial MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey (MWAHS) results, that:

- 1) 13% of Needham 9th grade students and 33% of Needham 12th grade students used electronic vaping products in the previous month;
- 2) almost half of Needham 11th and 12th graders have used vaping products at least once;
- 3) although monthly use of alcohol and cigarettes has declined since 2016, use of marijuana and electronic vaping products is on the rise among Needham youth.

Needham Response

The Needham Board of Health and the Needham Public Health Division are committed to protecting residents, particularly young people, from the health risks of vaping and nicotine addiction. The Town of Needham Public Health Division offers ongoing youth substance use prevention activities through the Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (SPAN). SPAN is a

community coalition focused on preventing and reducing youth substance use and misuse that provides education and informational events to our community members. SPAN programming and staff are funded through a soon-to-expire Drug Free Communities grant awarded to the Needham Public Health Division. SPAN has offered two youth vaping awareness forums for Needham parents and the community and is working within the Needham Health and Human Services Department to form a multi-disciplinary Vaping Task Force made up of town officials, community partners, law enforcement, school officials, and healthcare providers. The Vaping Task Force's role will be to make policy recommendations, offer community-based education and awareness programs, and identify treatment options that support cessation efforts.

Preventing teens from buying tobacco products has had a well-documented effect on reducing nicotine addiction. The Needham Board of Health and other boards of health in MA have taken steps to restrict access by young people to e-cigarettes and vaping products. Starting in July 2019, Needham limited the sale of all flavored e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products by requiring that they be sold solely in smoke shops, which only admit patrons over age 21.

On November 27, 2019 Massachusetts Governor Baker signed a new law that follows the public health emergency he declared on September 24, 2019 which placed a 4-month ban on retail and online sales of e-cigarettes and vaping products in MA. The new law, "An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control," is the first in the nation to introduce broad changes to how flavored tobacco and e-cigarette products can be purchased.

The Needham Public Health Division staff have been working to ensure that retailers are in compliance with the state ban and will ensure compliance with the new law. Inspections of tobacco retailers have been and will continue to be conducted to make certain that vaping products are not being sold. Additionally, recognizing that e-cigarettes may be used by those trying to quit smoking cigarettes, the Board of Health and the Public Health Division will continue to work with the MA Department of Public Health to make smoking cessation resources available to residents.

As we learn more about the health risks of vaping products during the pause in sales, the Needham Board of Health will continue to work with residents of our community and the MA Department of Public Health to find a healthy and sensible way forward. We feel this work is urgently needed to protect an entire generation of young people from respiratory illnesses and a lifetime of nicotine addiction.

Sincerely,
The Needham Board of Health



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