

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ODH Director Warns of Rise in eCigarette-related Injuries, Especially Among Children 5 and Under

COLUMBUS – Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Bruce Vanderhoff, M.D., MBA, today sounded a warning about an increase of injuries caused by exposures to eCigarette devices, or vapes, including liquid nicotine. These injuries are disproportionately affecting Ohio children ages 5 and younger.

“I want to raise the alarm that the liquids in e-cigarettes or vaping devices are proving to be an increasing risk to our young children,” Dr. Vanderhoff said during a [virtual press conference](#). “This liquid can contain nicotine, and also THC, CBD, flavors, or some combination of those. Young children can be poisoned by swallowing the liquid, taking a puff – if they have seen someone else use it -- or even from absorbing it through their skin or eyes.”

Since 2015, the number of vape liquid exposures reported to Ohio Poison Centers has nearly tripled, from 130 in 2015 to 360 in 2022. The data so far in 2023 signals yet another likely increase, with 328 exposures reported through September.

Of the 1,762 total exposures reported in that time, 1,301 – more than 70% -- have been reported among children ages 5 years and younger.

Ohio eCigarette Exposures Reported to Ohio Poison Centers:

Age Group	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*	Grand Total
Adult (20+ yrs)	36	24	25	23	35	22	41	23	22	251
Child (0-5 yrs)	89	82	68	71	107	134	187	300	263	1301
Child (6-12 yrs)	1	4	1	5	8	4	5	6	8	42
Teen (13-19 yrs)	4	7	4	15	36	21	12	30	34	163
Unknown				1		2		1	1	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>1762</b>

\*Through September 2023

Liquid nicotine is rapidly absorbed when swallowed or spilled on the skin and can result in symptoms in just minutes.

Symptoms of a small exposure are nausea and vomiting. Large exposures can affect heart rate, blood pressure, and even cause seizures. Young children may need to be evaluated in a health care facility or need emergency medical care for these exposures.

Dr. Vanderhoff said that nicotine, in whatever form it is delivered, is dangerous. It does not matter if that is by cigarette or a vape pen, it is harmful and can lead to addiction.

ODH has worked hard over the years, through numerous programs, to bring down Ohio’s smoking rate and in more recent years, to combat a rise in youth vaping.

Since taking office in 2019, Governor Mike DeWine has been a leader in this effort, working to pass legislation such as the “Tobacco 21” law in October 2019 that made selling any type of tobacco or nicotine products to Ohioans under age 21 a criminal offense.

There are signs that these efforts are working. Ohio’s adult smoking rate fell from 25.5% in 2011 to 18% percent in 2021.

In terms of youth, ODH saw some promising trends show up in the Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey that the department conducts every other year to monitor health risk behaviors in Ohio.

The 2021 data is the most recent available, and it showed that vaping use dropped substantially between 2019 and 2021.

The number of students who reported currently using a vape product fell among middle schoolers (grades 6-8) from 11.9% to 9.0% and for high schoolers (grades 9-12), those who reported current use fell from 29.8% to 20.0%.

Dr. Vanderhoff said there is much work to done, however. Ohio’s adult smoking rate, while improving, remains above the national average. The rise in injuries caused by vape liquids is the latest manifestation of this fight.

“I think many Ohioans have simply been unaware of these very real risks,” he said, “and I want people who have vaping supplies in their home to become more aware of the risks these devices can pose to children.”

If an exposure does occur, people can call the Poison Control Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-222-1222 to speak to poison specialists.

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***About the Ohio Department of Health***

*The Ohio Department of Health’s mission is advancing the health and well-being of all Ohioans by transforming the state’s public health system through unique partnerships and funding streams; addressing the community conditions and inequities that lead to disparities in health outcomes; and implementing data-driven, evidence-based solutions.*