

MaineHealth
Center for Tobacco
Independence

ENDS Youth Statement

The MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI) was founded over two decades ago to support a tobacco-free Maine through education, prevention, policy, treatment and training initiatives. Our services – including those offered through the Maine Tobacco HelpLine (MTHL) and the QuitLink – welcome all individuals who are looking for assistance relating to tobacco / nicotine use and dependence. These services are also available to those who wish to quit the use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (or ENDS, variably called e-cigarettes, vape pens, and many other terms, and herein after called “ENDS”).¹

In the past decade, ENDS have emerged as an alternative product to traditional combustible and smokeless tobacco. Since introduction, products have evolved in terms of the technology used as well as efficiency of nicotine delivery. Since entering the US market in 2007, youth use of ENDS has grown exponentially: since 2014 the devices have been the most commonly used tobacco product among US youth; and in 2018 alone, ENDS use increased 78% among high school students.

Prevention

For adolescents, and there is ample and clear evidence that the use of ENDS is associated with significant health concerns.

- Use of ENDS increases susceptibility to transitioning to use of combustible products, as well as dual use (use of ENDS in addition to use of other tobacco products).
- According to tax data analyzed by the US CDC, nearly all on-market ENDS contain nicotine – an addictive substance that interferes with adolescent brain development.
- Adolescents are developmentally vulnerable to developing substance use disorders; nicotine use during adolescence can increase susceptibility to addiction to other substances.
- Many of these devices also contain flavoring and other additives for which there is growing evidence of additional harm.
- The use of flavoring such as ‘cotton candy’, ‘gummy bear’ etc. conveys a special appeal to youth who may consequently not recognize that these products also contain nicotine.

For these reasons, CTI does not support adolescent use of ENDS, and instead supports evidence based strategies that prevent the initiation of use.

Treatment

The MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence does not promote nor support the use of ENDS as a treatment method to help people quit tobacco, regardless of age. This is consistent with the perspective of the FDA, which does not consider ENDS as approved or evidence-based treatment for nicotine use and addiction.

¹ ENDS are classified by the FDA and Maine law as tobacco products.

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A challenge is that there is a limited evidence based strategies for treatment of nicotine addiction specific to the adolescent population. What works for adults – who often present with more chronic nicotine addiction – does not have the same results for adolescents.

Despite this, treatment for adolescent nicotine use and dependence has emerged as an issue confronting parents, schools and healthcare providers. This is due in large part to significantly increased use of ENDS, as well as use of fourth generation products, such as JUUL™ and Suorin™, which more efficiently deliver large doses of nicotine to the body.

Clinicians across the country report using motivational interviewing, individual counseling, Nicotine Replacement Therapy (patch, lozenge and gum), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and mindfulness-based strategies to treat ENDS use in youth.² Additionally, the Clinical Practice Policy to Protect Children From Tobacco, Nicotine and Tobacco Smoke³ offers the following practice guidelines that can be used across all ENDS products:

- Screen all patients for tobacco exposure
- Advise patients to abstain from all forms of tobacco
- Do not recommend e-cigarettes for smoking treatment/reduction
- Offer counseling for nicotine as a first step
- Consider pharmacotherapy for adolescent daily smokers

We continue to work to stay current on the emerging evidence base for treatment of ENDS use, and we actively review research regarding Nicotine Replacement Therapy. CTI's goal is to stay consistent in our efforts to address dependence on all tobacco products, and to continue our prevention and treatment work to meet the needs of communities across Maine.

² https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/cessation/index.htm

³ <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/136/5/1008>