Protect Your Youth: Anti-Vaping Campaign for Adolescent Girls

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**New York State Vaping Epidemic**

Since 2014, e-cigarettes have been more common among US youth than traditional cigarettes (Dinardo, P. et al., 2019). This switch from smoking cigarettes to vaping comes from a variety of aspects such as convenience, positive advertising, and the flavors of vapes available. Vaping can be done discreetly almost anywhere, allowing for much more frequent nicotine consumption than using traditional cigarettes (Dinardo, P. et al., 2019). 75% of students in 2022 reported seeing vapes in ads, television shows, and other forms of media. Furthermore, e-cigarette companies utilize sponsorships to showcase their companies and brands (ALA, 2024). An estimated 7,700 vaping flavors exist, predominantly affecting youth (Dinardo, P. et al., 2019). 90% of middle and high school students who vaped reported using flavored e-cigarettes (FDA, 2023). Vape flavors and marketing strategies are attracting middle school and high school age students to vaping, putting their health at risk.

Throughout NYS, 18.7 percent of highschoolers vaped in 2022 (NYSDOH, 2024). This is detrimental due to the negative health effects associated with vaping. Vaping in adolescents is currently a much larger public health issue than cigarette usage. E-cigarettes are the most used tobacco product in high school students in NYS. Nearly 1 in 5 highschool students reported vaping nicotine compared to 1 in 50 who reported smoking cigarettes in 2022 (NYSDOH, 2024). E-cigarettes were originally marketed as a healthier alternative to help individuals quit smoking traditional cigarettes. Unfortunately, Vaping is a common gateway to tobacco and marijuana use for adolescents, and has similar negative health effects of vaping that are very similar to smoking cigarettes (Dinardo, P. et al., 2019). Vaping during adolescence can cause addiction, brain damage, lung damage and a decrease in overall health (NYSDOH, 2024).
Effects of Peer Pressure on Adolescent Girls

Peer pressure affects adolescent girls in different ways than boys, heavily influencing how young women perceive their physical appearance. Young girls feel increased peer pressure to be thin leading to increased body dissatisfaction (Gondoli, D. M. et al., 2011). In addition to the effects of peer pressure on body satisfaction in adolescent girls, social media has also caused an increase in dissatisfaction in both physical appearance and body type. Young girls are more susceptible to appearance dissatisfaction than young men from social media usage, putting them at risk for development of eating disorders (Jiotsa, B. et al., 2021).

Young girls may be attracted to vaping due to the misconception that vaping leads to weight loss. E-cigarette usage to control weight is common among adult populations. One study shows unhealthy weight control behaviors such as limiting food, consuming fewer calories, taking laxatives, diet pill consumption and fasting for 24 hours or more were significantly more common among adolescents who are current e-cigarette users. Despite these beliefs, research has not shown that e-cigarette usage leads to weight loss (Hod, R. et al., 2022). The Protect Your Youth Campaign will be used to inform both middle school and high school aged girls of the damage vaping had to physical appearance as well as the more commonly discussed damaging effects on lung and heart health.

The Effects of Vaping on Skin

Skincare products and routines have been trending across social media. Generation alpha’s 7 to 15 year olds have increased the demand for expensive luxury skincare products from brands such as Drunk Elephant, Glow Recipe, and Charlotte Tilbury (Muldofsky, M. et al., 2024). This increased emphasis on skincare was showcased during the 2023 holiday season,
with Generation Alpha causing a spike in the beauty industry (Fonrouge, G., 2023). This increased spending and skincare routine social media trends demonstrate how much adolescents prioritize the health and appearance of their skin. The Protect Your Youth campaign wants to discourage middle and highschoolers through making them aware of the potential damage vaping can do to their skin.

Vaping negatively affects wound healing and which can lead to negative dermatological effects such as infection and tissue necrosis. These factors also lead to excessive scarring of the skin (Li, M. et al., 2018). Nicotine use is also linked to chronically dry skin, acne, acne scarring, skin cancers, and oral cancer (Mitri, A. et al., 2021). The beauty industry has also seen a recent shift in the demand for anti-aging products in increasingly younger consumers (Shanbhag, S. et al., 2019). Another negative aspect associated with vaping is the development of wrinkles and overall premature aging of the skin (Mitri, A. et al., 2021). There is an evident emphasis on skincare routines, products, appearance, and youthfulness among today’s adolescents. This is proof that it is essential to inform middle schoolers and highschoolers of the acne, dryness, scarring and premature wrinkles associated with vaping and nicotine consumption.

**The Effects of Vaping on Hair Health**

Social media has illustrated an increase in hair care routines, protective hair products, and an overall emphasis on hair health and integrity. Adolescents' attention towards hair care was clearly represented in holiday gift trends in 2023, with skincare. A $55 shampoo and conditioner, Olaplex, was listed as a top gift recommendation for Generations Z and Alpha (Anderson S., 2023). The Dyson Airwrap, a $500 hair tool, was listed as a top gift after the holiday season (McKenna, K., & Rose, L., 2023). Vaping negatively affects hair health, which is evidently
important to adolescents. The Protect Your Youth campaign will emphasize this point, which is rarely focused on by other anti-vaping campaigns. Nicotine can accumulate in the hair follicle leading to premature graying and balding. Nicotine consumption negatively affects the follicle growth cycle and fiber pigmentation (Babadjouni, A. et al., 2021). This means the hair will prematurely gray and grow at a slower rate. Nicotine has the ability to accumulate in the hair shaft and follicle, causing damage. This has the ability to lead to premature graying and alopecia (Babadjouni, A. et al., 2021).

**The Effects of Vaping on Adolescent Mental Health**

Generation Z has heavily influenced attitudes towards mental health, and have greatly increased mental health advocacy. Compared to prior generations, Generation Z is significantly more likely to report mental health concerns and treat mental health conditions (Bethune, S., 2019). The Protect Your Youth campaign will work to make middle and high school students aware of the negative effects on mental health associated with vaping. Unfortunately, today's adolescents have higher levels of perceived stress and are at greater risk to partake in maladaptive coping methods such as substance abuse (Grelle, K. et al. 2023). These factor’s put adolescents at greater risk of nicotine use. The primary reported reasons for continuing to vape among youth within New York State are feelings of anxiety, stress, or depression (NYSDOH, 2024).

High School and middle school are notably stressful times due to coursework, grades, work, college decisions, and cliques, and it makes sense for students to seek escapes from stress; however, it is important to clearly establish that vaping is not a potential method of stress relief. Vaping can lead to unstable emotions, increased anxiety, and puts individuals at risk for future
drug addictions (Leslie F. M., 2020). Nicotine is highly addictive and cravings cause an increase in anxiety, eradicate behaviors and emotional distress (King, G., 2021). Nicotine also leads to emotional dysregulation. Vaping also has unique affects among adolescent individuals and their brain function. Vaping negatively impacts cognitive function (Leslie F. M., 2020). Nicotine can harm learning, memory and brain development (King, G., 2021).

The Effects of Vaping on Cardiovascular Health

Vaping’s negative effects on lung health is a more commonly discussed issue. The New York State Drop the Vape initiative emphasizes that particles in vaping increase the risk of heart disease and lung cancer (NYSDOH, 2024). Heart disease and lung cancer are serious issues, but adolescents may not worry about the risk of illness so far in the future. The Protect Your Youth Campaign wants to help adolescents comprehend what damage to the cardiovascular system may affect at their current age, in addition to warning about potential damage to their future health. Participation in sports is a key part of the highschool experience, a way to earn scholarships, stay active, and socialize with teammates. Vaping has the potential to make sports unenjoyable or take the experience away altogether. A common misconception in vaping is that vaping is healthier than smoking cigarettes, however, vaping causes similar effects as smoking on lung function and cardiovascular function. The long term effects of vaping are still not entirely clear; however, research is showing similar negative effects on the lungs with vaping and smoking. Vaping can decrease lung function and cardiovascular health (Darabseh, M. Z. et al., 2020). The cardiovascular system is essential to provide nutrients and oxygen to the entire human body. Cardiovascular health is an important aspect in sports performance because of its direct correlation to endurance (Nystoriak, M. A., & Bhatnagar, A., 2018). Vaping has been shown to
decrease muscle oxidative capacity and increase the rate at which muscles fatigue (Darabseh, M. Z. et al., 2020). Decreased lung function means heavier breathing and decreased muscle oxidative capacity means much lower endurance, these factors can work together to negatively impact both sports performance and how enjoyable playing a sport is.

**The Financial Cost of Vaping**

Middle schoolers primarily depend on their parents for money, and are usually only limited to cash on their birthday or potentially a small allowance. High schoolers have the ability to get jobs, but can only work limited hours due school and extracurriculars. High school also brings the potential additional costs of buying a car, buying a prom dress, and saving for college. These factors show how money is potentially limited to children in adolescents and should be spent and saved wisely. The average cost of disposable e-cigarettes is $20 once a week, which accumulates to $1,008 per year. The average cost to purchase e-juice for a refillable vape is $30 a week, which accumulates to $1,512 a year (Duke, A. et al., 2022). It is also important to illustrate that the cost of vaping increases over time. The longer an individual vapes, the higher their tolerance becomes, and the more frequently they need to vape. This leads to increased spending on nicotine (Duke, A. et al., 2022). The Protect Your Youth Campaign will work to discourage vaping by informing adolescents of the overall and constantly increasing cost of vaping. It is also important to emphasize that the cost of vaping is much greater than the price tag.

**Current Anti-Vaping Initiatives in NYS**

New York State has made major policy developments to prevent youth and adolescents from vaping. The major policies enacted in NYS to protect youth from accessing tobacco
products are banning the sale of flavored vapor products, eliminating discounts on tobacco and vapor products, banning the exterior display of vapor product ads near schools, and raising the vapor and tobacco purchasing age from 18 to 21 years old (NYSDOH, 2024). These are great strides against the vaping epidemic, but unfortunately have not had a drastic effect on vaping in middle and high schoolers. The ban on flavored vapor products has unfortunately increased the sale of non FDA regulated vapes, and has seemingly had little effect on adolescent vaping behaviors (Noguchi, Y., 2023).

New York State’s main preventative initiative towards vaping in youth is Reality Check, a youth community engagement program for teenagers. The program encourages teens to become leaders within their communities and expose the manipulative advertisement tactics of the tobacco industry (Reality Check of New York State, 2023). New York State also offers resources for teenagers attempting to quit vaping. New York State’s Drop the Vape program is a free anonymous text messaging program, created with input from teenagers who have successfully quit vaping (NYSDOH, 2024).

**The Purpose of the “Protect Your Youth” Campaign**

The Protect your Youth Campaign differs from the messaging in the Reality Check program already offered in NYS because the Reality Check program focuses on the manipulation of tobacco sellers and the distortion of tobacco products in the media. The protect Your Youth Campaign messaging is also significantly different from the materials used in the Drop the Vape program. The promotional materials utilized by the Drop the Vape program primarily focus on providing young people with nicotine addictions a supportive environment to quit as opposed to providing information to encourage quitting (NYSDOH, 2024). Furthermore, both of these
programs primarily focus on teens. The protect your youth campaign will focus primarily on preventing vaping and potential nicotine addictions among adolescent girls.

The Protect Your Youth Campaign will consist of an informational handout, posters, and social media posts. These materials will illustrate the vaping effects that seem most relevant to the target population of adolescent girls: skin health, hair health, mental health, cardiovascular health and the financial cost. The campaign will also include information to debunk common myths about vaping: healthier than smoking, causes weight loss, and relieves stress. The posters and informational handout will be distributed to middle school and high schools throughout New York State as well as locations frequently visited by adolescent girls. The main focus of the campaign is helping to inform adolescent girls of the health effects of vaping to prevent addiction. The Campaign will also help encourage adolescent girls to want to quit vaping and direct them towards the NYS program, Drop the Vape, for assistance and resources.
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