

# Tar Wars®

A tobacco-free education program for kids from the American Academy of Family Physicians

## Parent Information

In class today, your child participated in Tar Wars, a tobacco-free education program from the American Academy of Family Physicians designed for fourth and fifth grade students. The program consists of a one hour presentation that is given by volunteer health care professionals and educators. Children are encouraged to participate in the Idaho State Poster Contest. To learn more about the contest, prizes, and deadlines visit: [idahofamilyphysicians.org/tar-wars/](http://idahofamilyphysicians.org/tar-wars/)

### Be a Tobacco-Free Role Model

- ❖ Don't start smoking or use tobacco products.
- ❖ Take an active interest in your child's social life—know your child's friends.
- ❖ Teach your children to be aware of how tobacco products are promoted in the media.

### Take the Tobacco-Free Pledge

Children take promises very seriously. Ask your child to commit to being tobacco-free by entering into a contract with them. Consider using an incentive (i.e., money, a special trip) to reward them for staying tobacco free.

### Did You Know?

- ❖ Approximately 90% of tobacco users started at or before the age of 18.
- ❖ More than five million children alive today will die prematurely from smoking-related illnesses.
- ❖ The smoking rate is three times higher for children that live with a parent who smokes.
- ❖ Smoking-related diseases cost Americans \$96 billion a year in direct health care expenses, much of which come in taxpayer-supported payments.
- ❖ Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals; 50 are known to cause cancer.
- ❖ Children who breathe secondhand smoke suffer from increased incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, wheezing, coughing spells, and ear infections.
- ❖ There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure; even brief exposure can be harmful to health.

### Protect Your Children!

- ❖ Don't allow smoking in the home or car.
- ❖ Don't smoke while holding or near a child.
- ❖ Don't allow caregivers to smoke around your children or in your home.

### Trending Tobacco Products: "New Products, Same Targets"

- ❖ The tobacco industry continues to create new, slick products to keep their customers addicted. Many of these products are not subject to smoke-free air laws or FDA regulation.
- ❖ E-cigarettes, Snus, Snuff, Cigarillos, Dissolvables, and Hookas often resemble candy in packaging and/or flavor, which has been shown to disproportionately target youth users.
- ❖ All of these products can lead to nicotine addiction and cause serious health problems. There is no such thing as safe tobacco.

(See back for more information on E-Cigarettes/Vapes)

### Resources for Quitting Smoking

Call the National Network of Quitlines at 1-800 QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) or visit the Idaho Quitline at [www.quitnow.net/Idaho](http://www.quitnow.net/Idaho) to receive FREE information and help. For additional tobacco prevention and cessation resources, go to:

- ❖ [www.askandact.org](http://www.askandact.org)
- ❖ [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)
- ❖ [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)
- ❖ [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)

Tar Wars is owned and operated by the American Academy of Family Physicians and supported in Idaho by the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians



## **DID YOU KNOW:** Smoking e-cigarettes (“vaping”) is increasingly popular among teenagers.

### **Recent studies suggest that e-cigarettes can be a gateway — a first step —toward using tobacco cigarettes and other illegal drugs!**

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices designed to deliver nicotine with flavorings and other chemicals to users in vapor instead of smoke. They can be manufactured to resemble traditional tobacco cigarettes, cigars or pipes, or even everyday items like pens or USB memory sticks. Most contain a cartridge filled with a nicotine-laced liquid that is vaporized by a battery-powered heating element. A big concern about the refillable cartridges is that users may expose themselves to potentially toxic levels of nicotine when refilling them. Cartridges could also be filled with substances other than nicotine, thus possibly serving as a new and potentially dangerous way to deliver other drugs.



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Because they come in a variety of colorful, high-tech styles and flavors like cotton candy or gummy bears, they hold a high appeal for young children. They are also very appealing to children and teens because of availability online and celebrity endorsement.

Some parents may believe that their teenager’s vaping is not cause for worry because they are touted as a less dangerous alternative to tobacco cigarettes. Although they do not produce tobacco smoke, testing of some e-cigarette products found the vapor to contain known carcinogens and toxic chemicals (such as formaldehyde and acetaldehyde), as well as potentially toxic metal nanoparticles from the vaporizing mechanism. The health consequences of repeated exposure to these chemicals are not yet clear.

### **Nicotine . . .**

E-cigarettes contain **nicotine**, the same addictive substance found in tobacco cigarettes.

Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, and recent research suggests nicotine exposure may also prime the brain to become addicted to other substances.

Liquid nicotine can be very toxic to children, teens and adults. Just a few drops of nicotine liquid swallowed or absorbed through the skin can send a child to the emergency room.

Some symptoms of nicotine overdose to be aware of include confusion, cold sweat, seizures, tremors and pale skin.

### **Be Proactive . . .**

It can be difficult to know if your child is using e-cigarettes because vapes do not smell like tobacco or smoke. However, e-cigarettes have been associated with dry cough, as well as mouth and throat irritation. If these symptoms are persistent in your child with no other known cause, you should find out if they’ve been using e-cigarettes and try to help them quit smoking.

(refer to front page for resources) .

#### **SOURCES:**

- Electronic Cigarettes Are Another Route to Nicotine Addiction for Youth. JAMA Pediatrics, November 2015
- Vaporizers, E-Cigarettes, and other Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS). U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- FDA takes significant steps to protect Americans from dangers of tobacco through new regulation. U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- Strategies to help prevent teen smoking. Maura Ammenheuser, My Southern Health, April 21, 2016
- E-cigarettes: What parents need to know. Emily Brooke Riley, My Southern Health, May 20, 2016
- Drug Facts: Electronic Cigarettes. National Institute on Drug Abuse, May 2016

**In May 2016, the FDA issued new regulations that make it illegal to sell e-cigarettes (and cigars and hookah tobacco) to people under the age of 18. This rule went into effect Aug. 8, 2016.**