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Vaping

Nearly half of Massachusetts high school students have tried e-cigarettes at least once and nearly one quarter of them reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, a rate nine times higher than adults, according to the latest statewide data on the health and risk behaviors of Massachusetts youth. In an alarming comparison, more high school students reported using e-cigarettes than all other tobacco products combined. "The health risks of using e-cigarettes and vaping pens for youth are clear," said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. "Nicotine is addictive and has a negative impact on teen brain development, including increased risk for depression, mood disorders, and future substance misuse. That's why educating parents on these risks is so important."

"Vaping" refers to any electronic vaporizer, also known as e-cigs, vapes, vape pens. Though originally designed as harm reduction products for cigarette smokers, they have morphed into a trend that is becoming increasingly popular with youth. Vape pens and e-cigarettes are the latest examples of how the tobacco industry targets our youth. These products come in nearly 8,000 flavors many of which are sweetened to appeal to kids. Many teens have the dangerous misperception that vaping is harmless. The reality is that most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, an addictive drug which can harm the developing brain.

As of September 6, 2019, over 450 possible cases of lung illness associated with the use of e-cigarette products have been reported to the CDC. The investigation is ongoing and has not identified a cause, but all reported cases have indicated use of e-cigarette products. Many state and local health departments are creating regulations or policies to prohibit online and retail sales of flavored nicotine vaping products. The State of Michigan will become the first state in the nation to ban flavored vape products.

The Hingham Health Department is working with Hingham Police and Hingham Public Schools to educate parents and students about the dangers of vape and e-cigarettes. Our goal is to educate parents about the risks associated with these products and empower young people to make informed decisions about their health. This past year, the Hingham Board of Health updated our Tobacco Sales regulations to require an age 21 threshold for purchasing nicotine containing substances including most vaping liquids. Along with our school campaign the Hingham Board of Health is exploring other tobacco control policies. The Board welcomes public opinion and comment.