

E-cigarette use doubles among US teens: CDC study

WASHINGTON, USA: - The number of American teenagers and some children younger than that who are using electronic cigarettes doubled in 2012, a trend US health authorities say is "deeply troubling".



Some 1.78m US middle- and high-school students, between the ages of 11 to 18, smoked e-cigarettes in 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a new study.

The CDC said and estimated 160,000 of them had never smoked a conventional cigarette, a fact it found worrying, because the overall impact of e-cigarette use on public health remains uncertain.

"Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. Many teens who start with e-cigarettes may be condemned to struggling with a lifelong addiction to nicotine and eventually conventional cigarettes," warned CDC Director Tom Frieden.

E-cigarettes are battery-powered and deliver doses of nicotine and other additives via aerosol. About 10% of high school students reported trying an e-cigarette at least once in 2012, double the figure from the previous year.

And just under three percent reported smoking e-cigarettes regularly in 2012, up from just 1.5% in 2011. Of those who tried or used e-cigarettes, just over seven percent had never smoked a conventional cigarette.

Among middle-schoolers, experimentation with the product rose from 1.4% to 2.7% over the same period. "The increased use of e-cigarettes by teens is deeply troubling," Frieden said.

CDC smoking and health office director Tim McAfee noted that about 90% of all smokers begin smoking as teenagers.

"We must keep our youth from experimenting or using any tobacco product. These dramatic increases suggest that developing strategies to prevent marketing, sales, and use of e-cigarettes among youth is critical," McAfee claimed.

The US government is due to announce in October its plans for regulating electronic cigarettes. For the moment the laws differ according to each state, though a number of them have already forbidden their sale to minors. You must be at least 18 to purchase conventional cigarettes in many states.

The CDC study was carried out as a questionnaire sent to 20,000 students, part of an annual report on tobacco use among young people.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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