

Understanding Patterns of Vaping in Adolescents Attending a Hospital Drug & Alcohol Clinic

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Introduction: Nicotine vapes are common substances used by adolescents. Previous studies do not capture the vaping patterns of adolescents who are involved in polysubstance use. This study aims to investigate vaping patterns in adolescents referred to an Adolescent Drug & Alcohol Outpatient Clinic.

Method / Approach: Adolescent referred to an outpatient drug & alcohol clinic at The Sydney Children's Hospital Network, NSW Australia and identified as using vapes were asked to complete 2 questionnaires – the modified Hooked on Vaping Checklist for nicotine dependence and a 28-item questionnaire designed by investigators to understand adolescent vaping patterns.

Key Findings: 14 participants (85.5% female, median age 15) completed the questionnaires with all reporting nicotine dependence and use of disposable vapes. Combustible cigarette use was common (28.6% current smokers, 35.7% previous smokers). Other commonly smoked substances included cannabis (85.7%) and Hookah/Shisha (14.3%). Polysubstance use was common with 42% using 2 or more illicit substances in addition to vapes. Adolescents reported high rates of vaping for more than 12 months (85.7%). Vaping began at a young age - 50% reported using vapes at age 12 years or younger. Adolescents used high concentrations of nicotine in their vapes with 92.9% reporting using $\geq 5\%$ nicotine concentration vapes. They continue to vape due to addiction (57.1%), to reduce stress (21.4%) and due to the enjoyable flavours (14.3%). 57.1% reported having respiratory symptoms with only 14.3% interested in quitting.

Conclusions: Polysubstance using adolescents reported long periods of vaping, clear reasons for continuing to vape and high rates of respiratory symptoms. This study is ongoing.

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