Know the Risks: Asthma and Tobacco

Students with asthma experimenting with or using tobacco products may experience:
- worsening lung function
- increased asthma symptoms
- poor asthma control
- trips to the hospital or emergency room
- missed school days

Although cigarette use is declining, e-cigarette use is at epidemic levels.¹

Approximately 40% of students believe there was low or no risk of negative health effects from e-cigarette use.²

Illinois Middle and High School Student Tobacco Use Profile³

12.9% have **current asthma**.

22.3% of those with asthma had an **asthma attack** in the past year.

More students with asthma are **using tobacco products** compared to students without asthma.⁴

18.5% of students have **used any tobacco product** in the past month.

12.2% used **any combustible** product.

13.6% used **e-cigarettes**.

More students with asthma using tobacco are **having asthma attacks** compared to students with asthma who do not use tobacco.⁴

Not using any kind of tobacco protects students with asthma from having an asthma attack.⁵

What to do?

Talk to students with asthma
- Provide education on triggers, e-cigarettes, and harms from tobacco product use.
- Promote smoking cessation resources to students and their families.

Support policies which reduce youth access to tobacco products.

Definitions and sources on back page.
Created by the Asthma Program and Illinois Asthma Partnership Data and Surveillance Workgroup
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Current asthma: defined by a positive response to “Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you that you have asthma?” and to “Do you still have asthma?”

Any tobacco product: defined as use of any tobacco product (e-cigarettes, cigarettes, cloves cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, pipe tobacco, and/or bidis) on at least one day in the past 30 days.

Any combustible product: defined as use of cigarettes, cloves, cigars, pipe tobacco, and/or bidis on at least one day in the past 30 days.

Asthma attack: defined ”During the past 12 months, have you had an episode of asthma or asthma attack?”

Sources

2. University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, Center for Prevention Research and Development, Illinois Youth Survey, 2018
4. Rao-Scott chi-square test; p value <0.05
5. Based on an adjusted prevalence ratio; p value <0.05