



American  
Heart  
Association.

# Youth and Tobacco: *A New Crisis*

The **tobacco endgame** – the path to ending tobacco use and nicotine addiction in the U.S. – is within sight. This could save millions of lives.

But e-cigarettes and other products like cigarillos, hookah and smokeless tobacco pose a significant threat. They are gaining popularity, especially with kids and young adults.

## Addicting a New Generation

Not only are more **kids and young adults** using e-cigarettes, they are **using them more often**.

# 1 IN 5

### high school age kids

now report using e-cigs (vaping). They are the most popular tobacco product used by adolescents.

**Many adolescents falsely believe these new products are safe.** Some don't even realize they contain nicotine. But they can deliver much higher concentrations of addictive nicotine than traditional cigarettes.

There is evidence that kids and young adults may transition from these products to cigarettes and other drugs.



Nearly **90 PERCENT** of smokers **first try a tobacco product by age 18**. But if someone has not started using tobacco by age 26, they are likely to never start.

## Seeing Through the Smoke Screen

Tobacco companies have grown bolder in their efforts to keep people addicted and misinformed:



They fund lawsuits to prevent or weaken tobacco-control policies.



They spend millions lobbying lawmakers to oppose such policies.



They target products and promotions to youth and at-risk populations.



They support watered-down and less effective tobacco-control measures as a public relations ploy.



They fund organizations and groups that claim to address the tobacco epidemic but instead divert attention from proven measures.

## What Is Needed

Reaching the tobacco endgame and **preventing use by kids and young adults** will require strong government oversight. We need **stronger regulation** of the design, manufacturing, sales and marketing of all tobacco products. For example:



**Restrict marketing efforts** like celebrity endorsements, movie placements, price promotions, event sponsorships and merchandise branding.



**Ban flavors and sweeteners** to reduce appeal to kids.



**Put graphic warning labels** and nicotine concentration info on all products.



**Verify the effectiveness** of products marketed to help people stop smoking.

## What Works

We must also continue to **support proven strategies and public policy**:



**public education campaigns**



**clean indoor air laws**



**access to and coverage of evidence-based methods to quit tobacco use and nicotine addiction**



**tobacco excise taxes**



**raise the tobacco sales age to 21**

## What You Can Do

- 1. Advocate** for strong, comprehensive tobacco policies.
- 2. Talk with young people** in your life about the dangers of any tobacco or nicotine use.
- 3. Join local efforts** in your community and state at [yourethecure.org](http://yourethecure.org).

Learn more at  
[heart.org/tobaccoendgame](http://heart.org/tobaccoendgame)