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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health  
Report: #2025-INFO-14  
Date: February 28, 2025

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**Subject:**

Update on the Health Effects of Vaping/Electronic Cigarettes

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To provide an update on the health effects of vaping, local data and Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) programs and services related to vaping/electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes).

**2. Background**

2.1 An e-cigarette, or a vape, is a device that uses a battery to heat up a liquid (known as e-juice, e-liquid, or vape juice) which creates an aerosol that can be inhaled through the device's mouthpiece. Vapes come in different shapes and sizes and can look like traditional cigarettes, pens, USB flash drives, and box-like battery devices with a mouthpiece.

2.2 In 2018, the [Tobacco and Vaping Products Act](#) was implemented, allowing the sale of nicotine-containing vape products. Prior to 2018, nicotine-containing vape products were not approved for sale in Canada.

2.3 Most vape products contain nicotine. The [Nicotine Concentration in Vaping Products Regulations](#) set a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL for products manufactured or imported for sale in Canada.

2.4 Vaping was originally marketed as a way for adult smokers to quit smoking tobacco. Now, the vape market has expanded to include adults who had never smoked tobacco previously, especially young adults, as well as youth.

- 2.5 In Canada, many public health agencies and experts, like the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH), have been advocating for stricter regulations on vape products to deter young people from starting to use nicotine vape products. The CCMOH's most recent position is available in its January 20, 2025 public statement on [Nicotine Vaping in Canada as part of the National Non-Smoking Week](#).
- 2.6 The CCMOH remains significantly concerned by the high rates of nicotine vaping among youth. It recommends that the main goal of a regulatory approach to nicotine vaping products should be reducing access to and appeal of these products among young people.
- 2.7 The CCMOH also recommends that population level messaging should focus on approved and evidence-based smoking cessation methods, with greater emphasis on unassisted cessation. However, it also notes that nicotine vaping product manufacturers should be encouraged to submit their products for review and possible approval as smoking cessation aids.

### 3. Health Effects

- 3.1 Vape products are relatively new, so research on the long-term safety and health risks is not available yet. That means that the risk of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and other long-term health impacts associated with vaping are uncertain.
- 3.2 Cancer Care Ontario's 2023 [evidence summary](#) on vaping products highlights the following observed and potential harms associated with vaping:
  - a. Vaping nicotine can lead to symptoms associated with dependence (e.g., cravings and vaping more than intended).
  - b. Vaping generates direct toxic exposures, but at lower levels than tobacco smoke. Lower levels do not mean there are no risks.
  - c. Anyone who currently vapes or has vaped in the past should monitor themselves for respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, chest pain) and seek medical attention if they have concerns about their health.
  - d. Vaping may increase the likelihood of youth and young adults trying tobacco cigarettes.
  - e. Evidence for vaping as a smoking cessation aid continues to develop. Vaping is not currently recommended as an approved smoking cessation aid in Canada. Vaping might be beneficial for adult smokers who find it hard to quit using recommended smoking cessation aids.
  - f. In terms of second-hand exposure, vaping increases airborne concentrations of particulate matter and nicotine in indoor environments and, therefore, exposure to bystanders. Concentrations of particulate matter and nicotine are lower with vaping than tobacco smoking; however, less harmful does not mean there are no risks.

## 4. Vaping Trends

- 4.1 In December 2024, Health Canada released a new interactive data dashboard called the [Canadian Substance Use Survey \(CSUS\): Data Tool](#). The CSUS shares the most recent available data on the use of alcohol, tobacco and other substances including vape use among people who live in Canada, as collected through the 2023 CSUS.
- 4.2 The CSUS data tool offers visual presentations of vape use indicators, such as lifetime vaping, past 30 days vaping, frequency of vaping in past 30 days, and primary reason for vaping. These indicators can be broken down by year, age, sex, gender, province, self-rated physical health, self-rated mental health, disability status, race, and other sociodemographic factors.
- 4.3 Vaping trends in adults:
  - a. National level results from the 2023 CSUS show that only 3.6 per cent of adults aged 25 and older vaped in the past 30 days. Comparatively, 26.3 per cent of young adults aged 20 to 24 reported vaping in the past 30 days.
  - b. Trends show that young adults are vaping for different reasons than adults aged 25 and older. National results from the 2023 CSUS show that the most common reason for vaping among adults aged 25 and older that vaped in the past 30 days was to quit smoking cigarettes (35.6 per cent among adults 25 to 54, and 50.5 per cent among adults 55 and older). Comparatively, the most common reason for vaping reported by adults aged 20 to 24 that vaped in the past 30 days was because they enjoyed it (33.6 per cent).
  - c. Provincial level results from the [Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey \(CTNS\): summary of results for 2022](#), show that in Ontario only four per cent of adults aged 25 and older reported having vaped in the past 30 days, which is similar to the findings at the national level. Comparatively, 19 per cent of young adults aged 20 to 24 reported vaping in the past 30 days.
  - d. At the local level, results from the [Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System \(RRFSS\) 2022](#) survey show that vaping nicotine is much more prevalent than smoking tobacco among young adults aged 18 to 24 in Durham Region. Almost half (47 per cent) of young adults in Durham Region have tried vaping nicotine at least once and of these young adults, 78 per cent actively vaped within the past year.
  - e. The most common reason for vaping among Durham Region adults aged 25 and older was for harm reduction (i.e., to either help cut back, quit, replace long-term cigarette use or because they believe it is safer than smoking). Comparatively, the most frequently reported reason for vaping among young adults was because of peer pressure (26 per cent) and because of curiosity/experimentation or because they like it (23 per cent). This aligns with national trends.
  - f. The 2023 RRFSS data show that among Durham Region adults who have vaped nicotine, approximately 31 per cent did so to help cut back or quit

smoking cigarettes, whereas 69 per cent had other reasons for vaping, such as curiosity, they like it, peer pressure, or where smoking was not allowed.

#### 4.4 Vaping trends in youth:

- a. CSUS results show that 30.5 per cent of youth across Canada aged 15 to 19 reported vaping in the past 30 days. Of youth aged 15 to 19 that vape, the most common reasons for vaping were because they enjoyed it (34.5 per cent), to reduce stress or calm down (19 per cent) and curiosity (15.6 per cent).
- b. CTNS 2022 results show that 11 per cent of Ontario youth aged 15 to 19 reported vaping in the past 30 days.
- c. Local results from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey 2019, show that 32 per cent of secondary school students reported vaping in the past year. Seventeen per cent of students in Grades 7 to 12 reported friends or siblings as their usual source of vape products in the past year, and four per cent reported buying it themselves.

### 5. Local Program Initiatives

- 5.1 DRHD is responsible for enforcing compliance with the requirements under the [Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017](#) (SFOA). Under the SFOA, vaping is prohibited in the same places where smoking is prohibited. This includes all enclosed workplaces, enclosed public spaces and other designated places. This is to protect workers and the public from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and vapour.
- 5.2 The [Durham Region Smoking and Vaping By-law #28-2019](#), prohibits vaping in the same places where smoking tobacco, cannabis, and water pipes are prohibited (i.e., in enclosed public places and workplaces in Durham Region). This By-law includes prohibitions of smoking and vaping in these areas:
  - a. Any hookah/vape lounge and specialty vape stores.
  - b. Within nine metres of all public entrances/exits at workplaces and public places.
  - c. Within 20 metres of all public park properties in Durham Region.
  - d. On all post-secondary institution properties.
  - e. On all municipal properties.
- 5.3 DRHD manages complaints and concerns about smoking or vaping in public places and workplaces. Complaints can be submitted online via [durham.ca](http://durham.ca).
- 5.4 Under the [Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability](#), DRHD is mandated to complete inspections and investigations at all tobacco and vapour product retailers. Inspections include display and promotion inspections, as well as youth access test shops conducted by students under the age of 19 who attempt to purchase tobacco or vapour products. If a vendor sells tobacco or vapour products to a minor, the operator and owner of the

store may be charged with selling or supplying tobacco or vapour products to a person who is under 19 years old.

- 5.5 Specialty vape stores continue to operate in Durham Region. As of December 31, 2024, there are 69 registered specialty vape stores.
- 5.6 In 2024, DRHD tobacco enforcement officers (TEO) completed 407 vapour youth access inspections to address youth access concerns.
- 5.7 TEO continue to respond to complaints regarding students vaping on school property. The Smoke Free Enforcement Coordinator and TEO are collaborating with both the Durham District School Board and the Durham Catholic District School Board, along with internal DRHD colleagues, to support the implementation of [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 128](#). This policy focuses on student health as it relates to vape products (as well as recreational cannabis, and tobacco in schools). Joint visits were conducted to provide information and support to secondary schools. Additionally, DRHD is creating an electronic form for secondary schools to report students smoking or vaping on school property to improve efficiencies.
- 5.8 DRHD shares information and resources about vaping and smoking on its social media platform pages, as well as [durham.ca](http://durham.ca). This includes resources to help people quit, and resources to support smoke and vape-free homes, schools, and workplaces, along with other relevant resources.
- 5.9 Additionally, DRHD collaborates with school boards to provide evidence-based health education sessions to school communities (educators, parents, and students). DRHD supports an annual youth-led conference for secondary school students to learn about substance use, harm-reduction strategies, and the connection to mental health.

## 6. Previous Reports

- 6.1 Report [#2020-INFO-4](#) provided an update on the [Ontario Tobacco Monitoring Report 2018](#), which was released on November 27, 2019.
- 6.2 Report [#2019-INFO-81](#) provided an update on the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health's announcement that as of January 1, 2020, the promotion of vapour products in retail stores will only be permitted in specialty vape stores and cannabis retail stores, which are only open to people aged 19 and over.
- 6.3 Report [#2019-INFO-46](#) provided a notice to Health & Social Services Committee (HSSC) and Regional Council that:
  - a. There was a triple majority (consent from at least 50 per cent of the lower-tier municipalities representing at least 50 per cent of the electors).

- b. The Regional Smoke-Free By-Law is considered passed and By-Law 66-2002, a by-law to Regulate Smoking in Public Places and the Workplace, as amended in 2004 and 2007, is revoked.
- 6.4 Report [#2019-MOH-2](#) provided recommendations from HSSC to Regional Council related to the passing of the Regional Smoke-Free By-Law.

## 7. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 7.1 This report aligns with the following strategic directions and pathways in the 2025-2035 Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Healthy People, Caring Communities
- H1. Implement preventative strategies to support community health, including food security.
  - H2. Collaborate with partners to respond to complex social issues that improve community safety and well-being, including mental health and addictions.
  - H4. Support the development of healthy children and youth, including access to affordable and quality child care.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Although smoking rates among Canadian teens and young adults have been in steady decline since the early 2000s, there is a new generation of young people becoming addicted to nicotine through vape products.
- 8.2 Adults aged 25 and older report vaping for the purposes of harm reduction, but youth and young adults say they vape for other reasons, including because they enjoy it and to relieve stress. Most youth and young adults do not vape to quit smoking.
- 8.3 The Durham Region Smoking and Vaping By-law aligns with CCMOH recommendations with respect to vaping as part of smoke-free restrictions.
- 8.4 DRHD activities focus on prevention and reducing youth access to vape products. Inspection, enforcement and health promotion staff work to reduce youth access to vape products, educate residents about the risks associated with vaping, and protect residents of all ages from unwanted exposure to second-hand vapour.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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