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TEEN SMOKING RATES AT ALL-TIME LOW

E-Cigarette Use On the Rise, Cause for Concern



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Tallahassee, Fla.—Youth cigarette smoking rates in Florida are at an all-time low according to new data released on Tuesday by the Florida Department of Health. Conventional cigarette use among Florida high school students dropped from 8.6 percent in 2013* to 6.9 percent in 2015 – a 19.7 percent change. The Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS) also showed declines in other combustible and traditional smokeless products.

“Floridians should be proud of the historic progress made in the state to reduce the number of young cigarette smokers,” said Community Health Promotion Division Director Shannon Hughes. “Since voters approved the constitutional amendment to create Tobacco Free Florida, high school cigarette smoking has gone down an impressive 52.4 percent.”

This new report also marks another important, but more troubling trend. Current e-cigarette use among high school students has increased – from 5.4 percent in 2013 to 15.8 percent in 2015. Hookah use among high school students has also increased, from 8.2 percent in 2013 to 9.7 percent in 2015. Since 2009, when FYTS began tracking current hookah use, the rate has increased 26 percent.

“This alarming increase in e-cigarette use among teens has the potential to normalize smoking again after decades of hard work in Florida and across the country to reverse that norm,” said Hughes. “We are evaluating the best way to address this trend because, while there is much debate about e-cigarettes, we can all agree it is vital that we prevent our youth from becoming addicted to anything, including e-cigarettes and tobacco products of any kind.”

Issued annually since 1998, the FYTS report data is weighted to represent the entire population of Florida public middle school and high school students.

The new data from the 2015 FYTS also found that:

- Since Tobacco Free Florida launched in 2007, the current cigarette smoking rate among Florida youth, ages 11 to 17, decreased by 63.8 percent – from 10.5 percent in 2007 to 3.8 percent in 2015. Current use means at least once during the past 30 days.
- In 2015, 22.9 percent of high students reported ever trying a cigarette, a 43.7 percent decrease since 2007.
- In 2015, 8.5 percent of high school students reported current cigar use, a 37.7 percent decrease since 2007.

- In just two years, the number of Florida youth who reported ever trying e-cigarettes tripled from 4.3 percent in 2013 to 14.7 percent in 2015 among middle school students, and 12.1 percent in 2013 to 37.6 percent in 2015 among high school students.

The entire report can be found here: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/statistics-and-data/survey-data/fl-youth-tobacco-survey/documents/2015-state/index.html>.

Tobacco Free Florida and the Florida Department of Health have had a watchful eye on e-cigarettes since they emerged. The department is awaiting regulation and guidance from the Food and Drug Administration as the agency works to establish their regulation of e-cigarettes.

In July, Florida Surgeon General Dr. John Armstrong urged federal regulators to implement any and all measures to restrict the availability and access of liquid nicotine to those under 18, including containers of liquid nicotine and devices used to deliver liquid nicotine such as e-cigarettes. Dr. Armstrong's full letter is available here:

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/documents/newsroom/press-releases/2015/07/072215-liquid-nicotine.pdf>

About Tobacco Free Florida

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. Since 2007, more than 126,140 Floridians have successfully quit, using one of these free services. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

About the Florida Department of Health

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*Editor's Note: This press release highlights comparisons from the 2013 and 2015 Florida Youth Tobacco Surveys as every other year, the survey collects data on the state-level. On the even years, the survey collects county-level data.