

Editorial: How vaping harms our mental and physical health

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A long, shrill beep sounds throughout the halls, signaling the end of a class period. Some students head towards the bathroom, only to be greeted by a familiar, frustrating sight: an overcrowded space, a misty cloud of smoke, and fully packed stalls.

This is what many of us experience whenever we encounter the use of vaping in their schools. It's very frustrating to have to wait in a long line because people want to smoke. Students wait to use the bathroom, just for the bell to ring and possibly make them late for class.



Maia Hart

However, it would be wrong to only fixate on the fact that some teens smoke and not look at the why. As a staff, we understand why people vape due to stress or as an escape from everyday life. A report by the American Psychological Association shows that teens' stress level during the school year exceeds what they believe to be healthy (5.8 versus 3.9 on a 10-point scale).

Some of us on the staff are student athletes. Kaela Jordan, who competes for the Bethel Track team and for a volleyball club, experiences this stress and anxiety first hand. Not having time to do work or the ability to take time for yourself can be frustrating and can make someone desperate for a quick relief.

One of the main reasons people begin to vape is because of anxiety. A study has shown that more than 60 percent of vapers feel increased anxiety compared to 40% who have never vaped. This shows that mental health in teens is very important, because it leads to decisions that impact life choices forever.

In 2024, the FDA and CDC found that approximately 2.25 million middle and high school students reported using any tobacco products within the past 30 days, compared to 2.80 million users in 2023. This decrease is mainly due to a significant decline in the number of students who reported being a current e-cigarette user. This suggests our peers are beginning to draw back from vapes but it is still a huge and reoccurring issue.

Nicotine is highly addictive, and starting to vape at a young age can lead to huge health issues down the line. Examples of these side effects include but aren't limited to: organ damage, stunted brain development, cancer, and asthma.

As we all know though, many of our peers do not stop with just vaping nicotine. More and more young people are using vapes containing THC (and other unregulated substances). According to a recent scientific study, those using these products are doing twice as much damage to their lungs and organs as those vaping nicotine products.

Vaping is detrimental to children, especially teens, and we feel as though teens should not be exposed to substances that can stunt their growth. It creates irritability for the student and an overall change in their personality. As the Newport Institute states, "Vaping has numerous negative physical health effects, such as shortness of breath, swollen lymph nodes and a reduced blood flow and nutrition to the gums, and weakened lungs." Further proving the consensus that vaping is bad for teens.

Several deaths and countless cases of lung illness have been attributed to vaping. It's currently unclear whether the cause is due to the bootleg cartridges carrying THC or CBD oil or if it's legal nicotine cartridges. The CDC and the American Medical Association suggest that people stay away from vaping entirely during this investigation.

We believe that with the further rise of vaping in teens, it will lead to bigger problems. Vaping can become a stress reliever, but that can cause it to be heavily addictive and can also cause major health issues down the line. It's better to find alternative stress relievers that are more beneficial for your mind and body than vaping. Instead of turning to nicotine, try forms of expression such as yoga, reading, running, music.