**Teenagers who use e-cigarettes are 'more likely to start smoking'**

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**Using e-cigarettes makes teenagers more likely to take up smoking cigarettes, a study has suggested.**

A team of researchers from the [US](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/united-states)examined whether vaping was a predictor of future cigarette smoking among 17 and 18-year-olds.

The study examined American pupils who had never smoked a cigarette by their final year of secondary school and interviewed them again a year later.

It found that those who had vaped in the previous 30 days were more than four times more likely to have smoked a cigarette by the time of the follow-up interview.

The study, published in the journal Tobacco Control, also found those who had vaped in the past month less likely to consider cigarettes as posing a "great risk" of harm.

Scientists said this finding was "consistent with a desensitisation process".

"These results contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting vaping as a one-way bridge to cigarette smoking among youth," authors said.

"Vaping as a risk factor for future smoking is a strong, scientifically-based rationale for restricting youth access to e-cigarettes."

But Professor Peter Hajek, director of the Tobacco Dependence Research Unit at Queen Mary University of London, dismissed the findings as “trivial”.

He said: "This paper just shows that teenagers who try cigarettes are more likely to also try e-cigarettes (and the other way round) compared to teenagers who do not do such things. This is trivial."

Linda Bauld, professor of health policy at the University of Stirling, added: "We know e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking and we also know that teenagers are experimenting with these products.

"While we don't want to encourage that, the key public health priority is to prevent young people from starting to smoke, a habit that eventually kills one in two regular smokers."

The study comes after health experts gave vaping an emphatic thumbs after the first long-term study of its effects in ex-smokers.

After six months, people who switched from real to e-cigarettes had far fewer toxins and cancer-causing substances in their bodies than continual smokers, scientists found.