**KIDS CIG RISK**

**Teenagers who vape are four times more likely to try a cigarette, say scientists**

Nick McDermott, Health Editor

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A survey has found that 31 per cent of teenagers who used e-cigarettes also tried tobacco

**VAPING acts as a “one way bridge” to teen cigarette smoking, a study claims.**

Experts found young users were four times more likely to try to fags a year on.

And they warn the nicotine-delivery devices are a gateway for smoking among teens.

U.S. scientists examined whether vaping was a predictor of future cigarette smoking among 17 and 18-year-olds.

The study, published in the journal Tobacco Control, followed  347 teens for a year.

Those who had only vaped at the beginning, were much more likely to have tried a cigarette 12 months on.

Around 31 per cent of e-cig users had moved on to experimenting with tobacco, compared to seven per cent of non-smokers.

Lead researcher Dr Richard Miech, from the University of Michigan, said: “These results bolster findings for vaping as a one way bridge to cigarette smoking among adolescents.”

Researchers also found vapers viewed smoking as less harmful.

Experts said teens should be prevented from accessing the devices.

The study concluded: “Vaping as a risk factor for future smoking is a strong, scientifically-based rationale for restricting youth access to e-cigarettes.”

It is illegal to sell the devices to under-18s in the UK.

The rechargeable gadgets sell for as little as £10 each.

They give a nicotine hit but with no tobacco toxins and were regularly used by 2.2million Brits in 2015.

Brit experts dismissed the findings.

Professor Peter Hajek, director of the Tobacco Dependence Research Unit at Queen Mary University of London, said: “It 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.

“People who read sci-fi novels are also more likely to watch sci-fi movies than people who do not like sci-fi.”

And Linda Bauld, professor of health policy at the University of Stirling, said: “If trying an e-cigarette causes regular smoking, then we should be alarmed.

ALAMY

“However, this study and previous American studies which have made similar assertions have not found this.”

The latest study comes a day after UK scientists declared vaping to be “very low risk” compared to cigarettes.

Researchers at University College London found levels of cancer-causing toxins fell by up to 97 per cent in vapers six months after they switched from cigarettes.

But those who continued to use both saw no benefit.

A UK Vaping Industry Association spokesman said: “A recent survey by Action on Smoking and Health found regular use among 11 to 18-year-olds was rare and largely among children who currently or have previously smoked tobacco.

“There are also strict rules in place to ensure that vaping products are not marketed or sold to minors.

“UKVIA strongly advocates legally enforceable bans on the sale of vaping products to under-18s, as well as the enacting of advertising codes preventing the targeting of young people and non-smokers.”