

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Tobacco and vaping prevention education fosters awareness in 4th and 5th graders

AT A GLANCE

Learning about tobacco and vaping and their effects empowers youth to make better choices as they are confronted with pressures at younger ages to try using tobacco and vape products.

The Situation

Youth are being exposed to tobacco and vaping products at younger ages. Most often this exposure is not accompanied by knowledge of the harmful effects nicotine products can have. Most nicotine use starts in early adolescence, and advertising and marketing campaigns frequently target youth. In addition to adolescent brains being more sensitive to nicotine, their cognitive ability to comprehend consequences is not fully developed. Early intervention has shown more effectiveness at reducing long-term nicotine addiction.

Our Response

Data shows that initial trial nicotine use occurs first between 5th to 8th grade. We wanted to provide knowledge to youth prior to their first likely exposure to opportunities for tobacco and vape use. With this in mind, we contacted the elementary schools in Franklin County, offering to teach tobacco and vaping prevention classes to 4th and 5th grade students. We based our program on the Apply, Do, Reflect Model followed by the University of Idaho Extension Tobacco and Vaping Prevention lesson plans. We met and taught in all the 4th grade and some 5th grade classes within the public schools of Franklin County. There we taught about vaping, nicotine, brain development, lung



Students learn about vape pens and e-liquids as part of the tobacco and vape prevention program. Photo by Adobe Stock.

damage and the harmful ingredients in vape pens, tobacco and cigarettes. We also developed a video that was shown explaining firsthand, secondhand and thirdhand smoke exposure.

Program Outcomes

We taught and interacted with students, seeking to develop a rapport of trust. We sought to engage the youth with hands-on and interactive activities, as well as a visual and auditory presentation of information.

To gauge our impact, we had the students complete before and after surveys to estimate knowledge gain. Based on our interactions and survey results, students varied widely in their initial nicotine-related knowledge.

Due to time constraints and the age of the students, we made the survey simple, with only yes/no answers required. The questions were the exact same in the before and after surveys as follows.

Table 1. Survey responses of 218 students.

Question	Yes response before number	Yes response after number	Percent (%) change
Do you think you can list at least three health risks associated with using nicotine products?	83	193	51%
Can you explain what it means to be addicted to a substance?	153	199	21%
Can you explain what secondhand and thirdhand smoke is?	39	198	73%
Can you explain how secondhand and thirdhand smoke can negatively affect your health?	58	187	59%
Are you confident in your ability to avoid nicotine products in the future?	178	199	9%

The Future

We are entering our third season of teaching tobacco and vaping prevention. It has proven to be an engaging program that empowers youth to make better decisions with regards to use of nicotine-containing products. Recent studies suggest the need to include information about nicotine pouches in the training. We plan to incorporate this into upcoming classes.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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