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Harm Perceptions of Intermittent Tobacco Product Use Among U.S. Youth, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: We aimed to describe U.S. youth harm perceptions of intermittent tobacco use. **Methods:** Using data from the 2016 National Youth Tobacco Survey of U.S. students (grades 6–12; N = 20,675), we examined prevalence and correlates of all respondents' perceived harm of using four different tobacco products on "some days but not every day." Associations between current (past 30-day) use and harm perceptions were assessed using multivariable regression.

Results: Perceiving that intermittent use causes "no" or "little" harm was 9.7% for cigarettes, 12.0% for smokeless tobacco, 18.7% for hookah, and 37.5% for e-cigarettes. Compared with those who reported "a lot" of harm, youth with lower harm perceptions were more likely to report current use. **Conclusions:** One in ten youth perceived intermittent cigarette smoking as causing "little" or "no" harm; this perception was higher among current users. Efforts to educate youth about the risks of even intermittent tobacco product use could reduce misperceptions of harm.

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IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

This study assessed U.S. youth harm perceptions of intermittent tobacco use across multiple tobacco products. The findings underscore the importance of public health efforts to educate youth about the harms of all forms of tobacco use, including intermittent use of both conventional and newer tobacco products.

The Surgeon General has concluded that use of products containing nicotine in any form among youth is unsafe [1,2]. Although a substantial proportion of U.S. youth are aware that tobacco use can be harmful [3], nearly 4 million middle and high school students reported past 30-day use of at least one tobacco product

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in 2016 [4]. One reason for this could be that they did not believe their particular use pattern was harmful; many youth use tobacco products intermittently rather than daily [5]. Among high school students who were current users in 2014, the percentage of intermittent versus daily users within the preceding 30 days was 91.6% for cigar users, 90.3% for e-cigarette users, 77.4% for cigarette users, and 69.3% for smokeless tobacco users [6].

Research has documented the harmfulness of intermittent cigarette smoking [2,6]. Further, U.S. adolescent tobacco users who used a single tobacco product on 1–2 days during the previous month have reported symptoms of tobacco dependence, including strong cravings, irritability, and restlessness when not using tobacco, strong desire to use the products, and wanting to use the products within 30 minutes of awakening [7].

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 Table 1

 Prevalence and correlates of harm perceptions^a of intermittent tobacco product use among U.S. youth—National Youth Tobacco Survey, 2016

Characteristic	n (Unweighted)	No harm	Little harm	Some harm	A lot of harm
		Weighted % (95% confidence interval)			
Cigarettes Overall	20,009	3.7 (3.1-4.3)	6.0 (5.5–6.6)	32.9 (31.7-34.2)	57.4 (56.2–58.5)
Sex	20,000	5.7 (5.1 4.5)	0.0 (3.3 0.0)	32.3 (31.7 34.2)	27.1 (30.2 30.3)
Male	9,876	2.5 (2.0-3.0)	5.4 (4.7-6.3)	33.0 (31.6-34.4)	59.1 (57.6-60.6)
Female	10,016	4.9 (4.1–5.8)	6.6 (6.0-7.3)	32.9 (31.3–34.5)	55.6 (54.1-57.1)
Race/ethnicity White, non-Hispanic	8,836	2.0 (1.6–2.5)	5.9 (5.3-6.6)	35.4 (33.6–37.2)	56.7 (55.1-58.4)
Black, non-Hispanic	3,096	6.0 (4.9–7.4)	6.2 (5.2–7.2)	26.3 (24.2–28.5)	61.5 (58.9–64.1)
Hispanic	5,571	5.6 (4.6-6.8)	6.6 (5.4–8.0)	31.9 (30.2–33.6)	56.0 (54.5-57.4)
Other, non-Hispanic	1,629	4.6 (3.0–6.9)	4.7 (3.6–6.0)	31.8 (28.9–34.9)	58.9 (55.5–58.9)
School level Middle school	9,340	3.4 (2.7-4.2)	5.5 (4.8-6.2)	32.0 (30.2–33.7)	59.2 (57.5-60.8)
High school	10,587	3.9 (3.1–4.8)	6.4 (5.7–7.2)	33.6 (32.0–35.3)	56.0 (54.4–57.6)
Number of days smoked cigarettes within past 30 days					
0 days	18,703	3.0 (2.5–3.6)	5.1 (4.7–5.6)	32.7 (31.5–33.9)	59.2 (58.1–60.3)
1–5 days 6–19 days	452 194	7.9 (5.0–12.1) 8.7 (4.9–15.1)	22.8 (18.3–28.0) 21.4 (15.1–29.4)	38.7 (32.7–45.0) 47.2 (38.8–55.8)	30.7 (25.3–36.7) 22.7 (17.2–29.4)
20–30 days	267	21.5 (15.5–29.1)	13.6 (8.9–20.1)	33.1 (24.4–43.2)	31.8 (24.7–39.8)
Other (past 30-day) tobacco product use ^b					
Yes	2,512	8.7 (6.9–10.9)	13.9 (12.0–16.0)	34.7 (31.7–37.8)	42.7 (39.9–45.6)
No Any tobacco use by others in household ^c	17,466	2.9 (2.5–3.5)	4.8 (4.4–5.2)	32.6 (31.4–33.9)	59.6 (58.4–60.8)
Yes	7,043	4.6 (3.8-5.5)	8.0 (7.1-8.9)	34.6 (33.0–36.2)	52.9 (51.1-54.6)
No	12,046	2.9 (2.3–3.5)	4.8 (4.2–5.5)	32.2 (30.7–33.8)	60.1 (58.6–61.6)
Smokeless tobacco (chewing, snuff, dip, snus)	10.001	20(25 (5)	04 (7 (0.0)	244/224 275	50 F (50 0 55 f)
Overall Sex	19,981	3.9 (3.3–4.5)	8.1 (7.4–8.8)	34.4 (33.1–35.7)	53.7 (52.3–55.1)
Male	9,871	2.4 (1.9-3.0)	6.3 (5.6–7.2)	34.4 (33.0–35.9)	56.8 (55.3-58.3)
Female	9,993	5.3 (4.6-6.3)	9.8 (8.9–10.8)	34.4 (32.7–36.1)	50.5 (48.7–52.3)
Race/ethnicity			0.040.5		
White, non-Hispanic	8,825	2.7 (2.2–3.3)	8.9 (8.0–9.8)	37.6 (35.9–39.4)	50.8 (48.9–52.7)
Black, non-Hispanic Hispanic	3,091 5,560	5.2 (4.2–6.5) 5.3 (4.3–6.4)	6.3 (5.2–7.6) 7.7 (6.8–8.8)	27.6 (24.7–30.7) 32.1 (30.8–33.5)	60.9 (57.6–64.0) 54.9 (53.4–56.4)
Other, non-Hispanic	1,627	3.8 (2.3–6.1)	6.5 (5.0–8.5)	31.2 (28.0–34.5)	58.5 (54.5–62.3)
School level	0.00-	0.5/0.5	BB (0.0.5.)	22.4/21.7	FF F (=0.1 == -)
Middle school High school	9,325 10,574	3.5 (2.7–4.4) 4.2 (3.4–5.1)	7.7 (6.8–8.8) 8.3 (7.6–9.1)	33.4 (31.5–35.3) 35.2 (33.6–36.8)	55.5 (53.1–57.8) 52.3 (50.6–54.0)
Number of days used smokeless tobacco within past 30 days	10,374	4.2 (3.4-3.1)	8.3 (7.6–9.1)	33.2 (33.0-30.8)	52.3 (50.6–54.0)
0 days	19,268	3.2 (2.7-3.8)	7.2 (6.6–7.8)	34.5 (33.2-35.8)	55.1 (53.7-56.4)
1–5 days	248	12.7 (8.5–18.7)	33.5 (27.5–40.2)	38.8 (27.5-40.2)	14.9 (11.0–19.8)
6-19 days 20-30 days	75 177	25.5 (15.3–39.3) 36.7 (28.5–45.6)	38.5 (28.1–50.0)	22.6 (13.5–35.2)	13.5 (6.7–25.1)
Other (past 30-day) tobacco product use	1//	50.7 (26.5-45.6)	23.6 (16.3–32.7)	23.8 (16.2–33.4)	16.0 (11.6–21.6)
Yes	2,539	9.5 (7.8-11.5)	16.2 (14.7-17.8)	33.1 (30.6-35.6)	41.3 (38.8-43.8)
No	17,424	3.0 (2.5-3.6)	6.8 (6.2–7.5)	34.6 (33.2–35.9)	55.6 (54.1-57.0)
Any tobacco product use by others in household Yes	7.042	48(40.57)	10.8 (0.7, 12.1)	35.6 (34.0–37.3)	188 (169 507)
yes No	7,042 12,033	4.8 (4.0–5.7) 3.1 (2.5–3.7)	10.8 (9.7–12.1) 6.4 (5.8–7.0)	33.9 (32.3–35.5)	48.8 (46.8–50.7) 56.7 (55.2–58.1)
Hookah or waterpipe	_,	()	2.2(2.3 7.0)	(12.5 55.5)	(22.2 20.1)
Overall	19,981	5.3 (4.7-6.0)	13.4 (12.8–14.1)	35.5 (34.1-36.9)	45.8 (44.3-47.3)
Sex Male	9,801	4.4 (3.7–5.2)	13.4 (12.5–14.3)	36.8 (35.4–38.1)	45.5 (43.9–47.0)
Female	9,801	6.2 (5.5–7.1)	13.4 (12.5–14.3)	34.2 (32.4–36.1)	46.1 (44.2–48.0)
Race/ethnicity		(,	()	((= =====)
White, non-Hispanic	8,761	3.3 (2.8–4.0)	13.1 (12.1–14.1)	37.5 (35.5–39.5)	46.1 (44.2–48.0)
Black, non-Hispanic	3,060 5,536	9.0 (8.0–10.2) 7.6 (6.5–8.9)	15.2 (13.8–16.7)	30.2 (28.4–32.0)	45.7 (43.1–48.2)
Hispanic Other, non-Hispanic	5,526 1,614	5.2 (3.4–7.8)	15.0 (13.8–16.2) 8.7 (7.1–10.6)	35.0 (33.1–36.9) 33.0 (30.7–35.4)	42.4 (40.4–44.5) 53.0 (49.9–56.1)
School level	,	(2.2 7.0)	(20.0)	(22 (33.1)	(
Middle school	9,237	4.2 (3.6-5.0)	9.5 (8.8–10.2)	31.7 (29.7–33.9)	54.5 (52.3-56.8)
High school Number of days smoked hookah/waterpipe within past 30 day	10,508	6.1 (5.2–7.2)	16.5 (15.5–17.5)	38.4 (36.7–40.7)	38.9 (37.2–40.7)
0 days	7S 18,715	4.4 (3.8-5.0)	12.6 (12.0-13.3)	36.0 (34.6–37.5)	46.9 (45.5–48.4)
1–5 days	461	20.0 (16.3–24.2)	37.9 (32.1–44.1)	28.8 (23.9–34.2)	13.4 (10.1–17.5)
6–19 days	123	19.3 (12.6-28.3)	32.3 (24.1-41.6)	33.4 (25.4-42.4)	15.1 (8.9-24.5)
20–30 days	116	52.5 (40.3–64.3)	22.2 (14.6–32.4)	11.8 (5.9–22.5)	13.5 (7.5–23.0)
Other (past 30-day) tobacco product use Yes	2,456	13.4 (11.3–15.8)	25.8 (23.7–28.0)	34.9 (32.4–37.5)	26.0 (23.6–28.5)
No	17,342	4.1 (3.5–4.7)	11.5 (10.9–12.2)	35.6 (34.1–37.1)	48.8 (47.3–50.3)
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