



## **Written Submission to the Health Canada Consultation: Concentration of Nicotine in Vaping Products Regulations**

**February 2021**

## Summary

The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) is pleased to submit the following in response to the proposed regulations published in the Canada Gazette, Part I on December 19, 2020 on the concentration of nicotine in vaping products.

The CPS recognizes and strongly supports Health Canada's focused efforts to address the rapid rise of youth vaping in Canada. An urgent and comprehensive regulatory response is needed to reduce the rates of vaping product use amongst young people and non-smokers and to curb the many health risks associated with nicotine exposure. As such, we fully endorse the proposed regulatory response to establish a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL for all vaping products containing nicotine.

## Context

Youth vaping is a significant health risk and is associated with increased risk of tobacco and other substance use, mental health problems, pulmonary and cardiovascular disease, and unintentional injuries. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance and its use has been shown to impact brain development and increase future risk for substance use and addiction to licit and illicit substances (1-3). The younger the onset of nicotine use, the greater the impact on future risk of substance use disorders (4).

High nicotine concentrations make nicotine vaping products more appealing for youth who may be seeking euphoric effects from nicotine consumption. Currently, rates of vaping product use are highest among adolescents and young adults, most of whom are non-smokers (5). Among youth reporting use of a vaping device, 87% have reported using nicotine-containing vaping liquids (6). Consuming high amounts of nicotine through vaping, sometimes referred to as "dosing", can lead to nicotine toxicity, a syndrome consisting of intense abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, palpitations, hand tremors, headaches and difficulty concentrating and, in severe cases, seizures and arrhythmia (7). Nicotine addiction through repeated vaping may also lead to withdrawal symptoms if youth quit or are temporarily unable to access vaping products (3,8). Withdrawal symptoms such as intense cravings, irritability, nervousness, depressed mood, headaches, and insomnia can be highly problematic and may interfere with normal adolescent health and functioning, representing an important barrier for cessation (9-10).

Considering that a pre-filled nicotine cartridge can currently contain the equivalent in nicotine of 1-2 packs of cigarettes, the direct and associated risks of vaping products containing nicotine are a significant risk to the health, development and well-being of Canadian youth (11). Establishing a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL will reduce the risks of nicotine vaping and may help reduce rates of nicotine use and addiction among Canadian youth.

## Recommendations

### A. Establish and enforce a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL

Lowering the maximum concentration of nicotine allowed in vaping products will bring Canada into alignment with provincial and international jurisdictions (including British Columbia, Nova Scotia and the European Union) who have already established 20 mg/mL of nicotine as a maximum concentration level.

Most importantly, national alignment with this standard will help reduce both the appeal of, and the risks associated with the use of vaping products containing nicotine for Canadian youth.

While the CPS fully endorses the proposed legislation, we are concerned over the potential lack of enforcement that has undermined previous efforts to better regulate the packaging, promotion, sale and use of vaping products in Canada. To fully meet the objective of this regulation and of the *Tobacco and Vaping Products Act* more broadly, meaningful, consistent and transparent enforcement mechanisms must be established in lockstep with the rollout of regulatory measures.

## **B. Ban flavoured vaping products**

In addition to moving forward with the proposed nicotine concentration limit, the CPS strongly recommends banning all vaping product flavours except for tobacco flavours. A wide availability of youth-friendly flavours has significantly contributed to the popularity of vaping in Canada and has placed millions of youth and non-smokers at risk of the many physical and mental health effects of e-cigarette use (5).

Fruit, mint/menthol and candy/dessert flavoured e-liquids are particularly preferred by youth. While the CPS recognizes the regulatory steps that have been taken to try to prevent the promotion of youth-friendly flavours such as candy, dessert or soft drinks, these remain widely available with many companies making only slight modifications to packaging or product name to circumvent regulations.

The CPS urges Health Canada to follow the lead of many other provincial and international jurisdictions in banning flavoured vaping products. Momentum across jurisdictions including Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Ontario is quickly moving towards banning or at least significantly restricting the availability of flavoured vaping products. Canadian public health would be improved and the appeal of vaping to youth and non-smokers greatly reduced through a national ban on flavoured vaping products.

## **Conclusion**

Vaping represents a significant and growing public health burden, particularly for those under the age of 25. The proposed regulatory measures to establish a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 mg/mL represent a significant and much needed step forward to reduce the risks associated with vaping products containing nicotine and could help reduce the high rates of vaping amongst adolescents. To ensure that decades of progress in reducing tobacco use among youth is not undone by the rise in nicotine vaping, the full implementation of these regulations alongside meaningful enforcement mechanisms is essential.

## **About the CPS**

The Canadian Paediatric Society is the national association of paediatricians, committed to working together to advance the health of children and youth by nurturing excellence in health care, advocacy, education, research and support of its membership. Founded in 1922, the CPS is a voluntary professional association that represents more than 3,600 paediatricians, paediatric subspecialists, paediatric residents, and others who work with and care for children and youth. The CPS is governed by an elected Board of Directors representing all provinces and territories.

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