

In September, the FDA declared youth vaping an “epidemic.” Vaping is a fairly new trend, but it has already gotten to the extent where e-cigarettes use among high school students has become more prevalent than cigarette use among these students, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Vaping is also popular among college students as it’s a very common sight to see some students using vape pens while walking to class, partying, or going to bars. UIUC labels itself as a “smoke-free campus” and even recently, banned the use of all tobacco products on campus. There is limited research on vaping and more awareness is being spread on the topic of vaping like the Undergraduate Library’s mini Vaping 101 poster campaign.

It would be beneficial for my story to talk to students who vape, what got them into vaping and why they continue to vape. I would also tie that in with research regarding the effects of vaping and how prevalent it has become among college students. I would also talk to vape store owners in the Champaign-Urbana area and get their insight on the rise of these alternative nicotine products and how often they have college students come in with an interest in vaping.

QUOTES —

The students I spoke to attempted to describe why some students turn to vaping.

“My friend Tom, he didn’t vape but he started hanging out with some people that did vape, and I think part of it is peer pressure and part of it is just getting hooked on it,” Adam Matolak, freshman in HDFS, said. “There’s also my other friend who started vaping to stop biting his nails, for example. He’s trying that out and apparently it’s working, but we’ll see.”

Based off of seeing other people vape and the effects it has had on them, a student said how she didn’t get the hype.

“I don’t get why people do it because I know they’re just addictive,” Alyssa Hawe, freshman in Mechanical Engineering, said. “A lot of people said they first started out just to get the edge off, and now they’re full on addicted and they just have to do it now.”

With research still being done on this new trend, Matolak said he doesn’t feel comfortable vaping.

“I personally think putting chemicals into your lungs that we don’t have a lot of research on and just the fact that we don’t know much about it — there’s a risk to it,” he said. “I think others should also be wary about it.”