

**Canadian Dental Assistants Association**

**POSITION STATEMENT**

**Use of Tobacco, Cannabis and vaping products**

The Canadian Dental Assistants Association (CDAA) firmly endorses the avoidance and cessation of recreational use of tobacco and cannabis products (including combustible smoking, vaping and smokeless methods of ingestion) to maintain and improve the oral and general health of Canadians.

Smokeless tobacco and smoking cannabis and tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, hookahs etc) releases carcinogens which cause cancer. Vaping products, introduced as a smoking cessation aid, have also demonstrated short term negative health effects; health effects of long term use are as yet unknown. The first signs of damage caused by smoking and tobacco are seen in the oral cavity and it is incumbent on all oral health professionals to disseminate information to improve oral health.

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance present in all tobacco products, including many pods used in Electronic(“e”)-cigarettes and in Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (“ENDS”); nicotine itself is not carcinogenic but does contribute to chronic exposure to carcinogenic substances through habitual use of tobacco-containing products including e- cigarettes.

The CDAA supports:

* The continuation of a ban on marketing or selling cannabis, tobacco and vaping products to minors.
* Prohibiting the use of cannabis, tobacco and vaping devices in public spaces and workplaces.
* Prohibiting packaging, labelling and flavouring of cannabis, tobacco and e-cigarettes which targets youth.
* The Government of Canada prohibition of manufacturing, selling or importing vaping products containing nicotine.
* Promotion of cessation programs and correct usage of cessation aids (eg nicotine chews) which are proven effective.

The CDAA recommends:

* The Government of Canada collaborate with stakeholders to establish a new legislative framework to regulate vaping products with and without nicotine.
* The Government of Canada immediately conduct longitudinal studies on the health effects of vaping in order to determine the short- and longterm health effects of usage.
* Packaging on cannabis, tobacco and vaping products be child-resistant and clearly indicate the contents (including nicotine) and all appropriate safety warnings.
* Strict regulation and restrictions imposed on marketing of cannabis, tobacco and vaping products, including prohibiting these marketing activities from targeting youth.
* Prohibiting flavouring of cannabis, tobacco and vaping products to appeal to youth; particularly in consideration that increasing numbers of youth, numbering in the thousands and with many as young as 10 years-old, are using smokeless, combustible and vaping products each day.
* A Government of Canada public health awareness campaign educating Canadians on the risks associated with cannabis, tobacco and e-cigarette usage.
* Dental assistants and all oral health professionals routinely inquire about patients’ use of cannabis, tobacco and vaping products
* Dental assistants inform themselves through continuing education about the oral health risks of using cannabis, tobacco products and vaping products and be prepared to share helpful information about their harmful health effects with patients.

**Rationale:**

Smoking tobacco (cigars, cigarettes, hookah, pipe, etc) has been proven a major health risk after decades of debate and industry resistance; other forms of tobacco such as smokeless tobacco (chewing, dipping, dissolvable, snuff and snus) also pose health risks including oral cancer. All tobacco products contain nicotine and are highly addictive; there is no safe way to take tobacco. The majority of adult tobacco users express the desire to quit and dental assistants may be instrumental in providing patients with valuable information to aid them in this endeavor.

E-cigarettes debuted in North America in 2007 as a safer alternative to combustible smoking and as a smoking cessation aid. Their uptake in the global marketplace was swift, with $3 billion USD spent worldwide in 2013.[[1]](#footnote-1) E-cigarettes have recently been proven to pose signifigant health risks; they have been identified as the source of *EVALI* (**E**-cigarette or **VA**ping product use **L**ung **I**njury) which has been confirmed as the cause of 39 deaths so far and the cause of over 2000 cases of lung injury and illness. Results of laboratory tests conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on fluid samples from EVALI patients reveal the presence of tetrahydracannbinol (THC) and nicotine in the majority of samples[[2]](#footnote-2).

Cannabis became legal in Canada in 2018 with the passing of Bill C-45. Smoking marijuana poses similar oral health risks as smoking tobacco and using cannabis products in e-cigarette pods exposes users to EVALI and possibly other, as yet unknown, risks. E-cigarettes may permit users to ingest concentrated doses of nicotine and THC faster than with combustible methods which may contribute to overdosing.

E-cigarette users may be exposed to inhalation of formadehyde, pesticide- grade nicotine and nano-particles of e-cigarette batteries; the risks of these substances is as yet unkown (also unknown is the risk of second hand vapour). Oral health risks associated with combustible smoking are well-established; the risk of diseases such as oral cancer and periodontal disease associated with using tobacco, marijuana and other substances through vaping have not yet been established. The CDC is encouraging people not to use e-cigarettes and vaping products in any form and Health Canada and the Office of the Chief Dental Officer (OCDO)[[3]](#footnote-3) recommend oral health professionals remain informed of current scientific literature on the risks of these products so as to provide optimal care to patients.

1. *The tobacco industry at a crossroads: cigarettes growth falters as focus falls on alternatives.* Euromonitor international. July 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with the Use of E-cigarette, or Vaping, Products*. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html>. Nov. 8, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Evidence Synthesis: Effects of E-cigarette Use on Oral Health.* Dr. M. Rouabhia for the OCDO. June 25, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)