

**a**udrey had been a smoker for four-and-a-half years before she decided to try an e-cigarette. “My friends were using e-cigs,” explains the now 20-year-old California native. “And I’d seen a few commercials on TV and thought they looked pretty cool.”

According to a recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of high school students who tried e-cigarettes more than doubled between 2011 and 2012. And it’s no surprise, considering the intense marketing seemingly aimed at teens. “E-cigarette makers are spending millions of dollars on advertising,” says Danny McGoldrick, vice president for

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research at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. At press time there were no legal age limits to buy e-cigarettes in many states, and no federal advertising restrictions—meaning that unlike with real cigarettes, which aren’t allowed to intentionally appeal to young people, makers of the new kind can try to get you interested however they want. From sponsorships at Bonnaroo to celebrity endorsement deals to fun flavors like cherry, vanilla, and peach, e-cigarettes want to be your new best friend.

Like many users, Audrey believes she’s healthier since she traded traditional cigarettes for vaping. And the truth is, she might not be wrong. “There’s no question that puff for puff, an e-cigarette is delivering less bad stuff than a cigarette, since it doesn’t contain tar or carbon monoxide,” says Stanton Glantz, Ph.D., a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and director of the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education. “They do, however, contain nicotine, ultrafine particles, volatile organic compounds, and metals.” In other words, even with the cleaner vapors, you can be inhaling tin, lead, and nickel. Electronic cigs are too new for researchers to know what the long-term effects are, but Dr. Glantz cautions that inhaling metals can’t be good for you—period.

Not only that, but vaping can pose dangers even beyond smoking the old-fashioned way: Just one cartridge has the nicotine equivalent of several traditional cigarettes. “With regular cigarettes, you smoke one and it goes out,” Dr. Glantz explains, “but with an



e-cigarette, you can easily keep puffing until you consume the whole vial of fluid, which gives you giant doses of nicotine.”

No matter how it’s delivered, nicotine is addictive and dangerous. And because e-cigarettes aren’t yet regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (though they will likely be soon), the amount of nicotine listed on a cartridge label isn’t always accurate. “Adolescents are more susceptible to the effects of nicotine because they’re still going through critical periods of growth and their brains are developing,” McGoldrick notes. “Research shows that young people can experience symptoms of

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dependence—including withdrawal and tolerance—after minimal exposure to nicotine.” That’s why some people fear that e-cigarettes are a gateway to traditional cigarettes and other tobacco products.

“Using e-cigs is my way of relaxing,” Audrey says. “I don’t see myself going back to the old kind, but I also don’t know how much healthier e-cigarettes are.” Because they’re a new phenomenon, no one does—and that’s all the more reason to play it safe. —CELIA SHATZMAN

Prop stylist: Andréa Huelse

**CLOUDED JUDGMENT**  
E-cigarettes are everywhere, but the facts...not so much.  
PHOTOGRAPH AND ARTWORK BY BELA BORSODI.

**ELECTRIC YOUTH**  
Everything you need to know about e-cigarettes.