

'Tobacco-free nicotine' claims could lead non-smokers to try E-cigarettes

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"Tobacco-free nicotine" claims may reduce young adults' perception of the health risks of e-cigarettes, according to a Rutgers study
Young adults who do not use tobacco products report higher intentions

of using Puff Bar, a leading e-cigarette brand that has a "tobacco-free nicotine" claim, than products with the regular claim of containing nicotine, according to a Rutgers study.

The study, published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, also found that the claim may reduce young adults' perception that the products might cause health risks and may prompt the use of the Puff Bar brand over other e-cigarette brands and types.

E-cigarettes that contain nicotine derived from tobacco are subject to FDA regulation and many local tobacco control policies as tobacco products, but products made with synthetic nicotine currently fall into a regulatory gap.

"Many e-cigarette brands now are marketed with 'tobacco-free nicotine' or 'synthetic nicotine' claims to circumvent local and federal tobacco control measures, such as flavored e-cigarette sales restrictions and the minimum tobacco purchasing age of 21," said co-author Julia Chen-Sankey, a researcher at the Center for Tobacco Studies at Rutgers University and an assistant professor at Rutgers School of Public Health.

The online study asked 1,822 people aged 18 to 29 who either never used tobacco or who only had experimented with it to view depictions of Puff Bar e-cigarettes with either the claim that the product contains "tobacco-free nicotine," as it is marketed, or simply "contains nicotine." They were then asked if they would use these products if they had the opportunity, how harmful they think they are to health, whether they felt positive or negative if they used these products and if they would be more or less likely to use the Puff Bar product versus another e-cigarette brand.

"The results are concerning given that little is known about the health effects of using tobacco-free nicotine products and regulations are not

immediately clear," said Chen-Sankey. "An increasing number of e-cigarette brands and products are marketed with 'tobacco-free nicotine' or similar claims like 'non-tobacco nicotine' or 'synthetic nicotine.' If such claims increase the likelihood of [e-cigarette](#) use among young people who may not otherwise use e-cigarettes as we found, regulatory actions need to be taken immediately to prevent increased use of e-cigarettes among young people."

More information: Julia Chen-Sankey et al, Effect of a 'tobacco-free nicotine' claim on intentions and perceptions of Puff Bar e-cigarette use among non-tobacco-using young adults, *Tobacco Control* (2021). [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-056957](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-056957)

Provided by Rutgers University

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