

# Dear FDA: 2.5% Of High School Students, Most Current Or Former Smokers, Is Not A Vaping 'Epidemic'



By Hank Campbell — September 25, 2018



Credit:FDA

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has done many positive things recently: they eased red tape on generic drug approval, which is 85% of U.S. spending for pharmaceuticals, setting a new record last year by August and are [on pace to exceed that again](#) [1] before the end of this fiscal year; they finally stated they were going to [look into the suspect labeling claims made by Big Organic](#) [2], which are far more deceptive [than anything kratom trade groups engage in](#) [3]; and [they pushed back the "grandfather" date for vaping devices](#) [4] so they didn't create millions of casual criminals who did nothing wrong but buy a device before a capricious date created by the previous administration.(1)

Given that track record, and all of the successes that e-cigarettes have had in ending the scourge of smoking, it seems strange FDA would suddenly start acting like the Centers for Disease Control (and Prevention, they now want to claim) and scaremonger those products without evidence.

Unlike many bureaucrats, Dr. Gottlieb is not a bureaucrat at heart. He is not a believer in social authoritarianism. He does not believe that government, large institutions, or Big Pharma are the only way progress is made. As is well known, vaping is the result of none of those. Unlike nicotine gums and patches, e-cigarettes were not created by pharmaceutical companies and endorsed by universities like UC San Francisco. Instead of a top-down mandate, e-cigarettes are a consumer-driven, bottom-up fix for smoking. And that's a good thing. That is why FDA should not be a vassal to the CDC when it comes to smoking cessation.

Unlike CDC, FDA has a staunchly pro-science, reasonably free market leader. CDC has

hyperbolic statisticians that compile junk surveys and used them to start the belief there is a vaping "epidemic." How can we trust CDC claims about prescription opioids and deaths when [they also tried to manufacture a pre-diabetes epidemic](#) [5] and now go after vaping?

That lack of consumer trust is why FDA should not go down the same path. Cancer patients in pain need to trust government, not to feel like they are being lumped in with recreational junkies to try and look nationally prominent, and the public should trust that government wants cigarettes to stop, not that they are promoters of abstinence only quit-or-die ultimatums. But that is what consumers begin to think [when Dr. Gottlieb claims](#) [6] he has [access to "secret" data](#) [7] that shows the opposite of what the National Youth Tobacco Survey has found and that a vaping epidemic is occurring among high school students.

Actual data, not secret sauce, instead show vaping as a fad peaked years ago in the 15-16% range and [has held steady at only 60 percent of that level since](#) [8].

That is not an epidemic.

When it comes to activist claims about cancer, air quality or food, chemophobia is debunked in four words; where are the bodies? And claims about a dark undercurrent of a vaping "epidemic" likewise dissipate when exposed to the light by two questions.

### **If vaping is a gateway to smoking, where are all the new smokers?**

Smoking is a pediatric disease. The Council led the charge in forcing companies to stop marketing their products to children, and we have cheered when FDA has cracked down on similar [creepy weirdos running vape shops](#) [9] who were busted marketing their products to children.

Smoking is at its lowest levels, including among kids, since mass production of cigarettes came into being, but we know after about 50,000 years of human culture that people do dumb stuff - and young people do even more dumb stuff. There is a reason a teenager causes car insurance for parents to go up. Teens rebel, they take risks. So some may have jumped on the vaping fad when The Man was telling them how risky it was, but they are not taking up smoking more because of it. And there is no evidence that any more are "addicted" beyond the colloquial sense, like people who claim to be addicted to video games or sex.

I don't buy my kids Red Bull or Starbucks coffee. Do they sometimes buy it anyway, to rebel? I have no idea. Am I worried they will become addicted to caffeine and suddenly start buying jars of caffeine powder from China and go crazy on it? Not really, because paranoia is a terrible way to live life and to raise children. When there are 300,000,000 people, a one in a million chance means 300 people are going to do stupid stuff, but that is no reason to ban Starbucks.(2)

Dr. Gottlieb knows junk science in medicine and technology, he is both a doctor and a patient. He shouldn't fall prey to the same hype about vaping.

### **If vaping is so addictive, why do so few teens become addicted?**

I see bizarre commercials about vaping all the time now - [zombies](#) [10] and [what not](#) [11].(3) It's all very 2009, when a Zombie Apocalypse was a thing and superhero movies were new, but maybe the old fuddy-duddy's at FDA think that is still hip with those millennials. Except millennials are 30

years old now. These commercials are making actual young people laugh.



Above is a screenshot from the newest FDA scaremongering commercial. What is this hoping to show? Vaping will give you throat cancer? It is well-known that smoking and HPV are the leading causes. Is it hoping to scare us into believing our children will be actual zombies? Well, that is just as evidence-based as anything else CDC claims.

What this dopey ad really does is use cool CGI to make it look to teens like nifty BioPunk transformations are occurring in your body if you inhale nicotine.

It's like the egg cracking in a frying pan in those old War On Drugs ads. Kids are laughing. That is not what FDA should be seeking to accomplish with taxpayer money.

### **Use data about vaping the same way you do drug approval**

The data show only 2.5 percent of high school students (16 percent of "current" users) [reported](#) <sup>[12]</sup> vaping on 20 or more days in the previous month, and *nearly all were former or current smokers*.

That's not an epidemic, it is not even a cause for concern. Yes, some young people will be idiots and start smoking, but the number of them who started with vaping and switched to cigarettes are in the statistical noise range. Unless we demand perfection from young people it is bound to happen. When there are 72 million young people, a few of them can be counted on to do anything. But for the ones who do actually smoke, if they use e-cigarettes for harm reduction even a few times per day, that is a public health win. For the rest, vaping is a fad and maybe it will become a pastime, like puffing on a pipe.

Don't make vaping cooler for kids by having government leadership cave in to hysterical nonsense. An FDA commissioner has a lot of knobs to turn to promote sensible science and health policies and e-cigarettes are an inconsequential problem in teens that doesn't need fixed.

### **NOTES:**

(1) They even collaborate with other agencies more. Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue, and HHS Secretary Alex Azar retweet each other so much they should take a

Science Bros picture together and make it their joint social media profiles.

(2) Yet trial lawyers in California and NGO litigation groups like Center for Science in the Public Interest absolutely do want to sue over coffee. CSPI claimed for decades that coffee causes breast cancer, and they used junk epidemiology and surveys to promote it. Now they have the CDC to help.

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**Links**

- [1] <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/healthcare/fda-broke-monthly-generic-drug-approval-record-in-july>
- [2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/08/10/grande-armee-big-organic-may-be-marching-toward-its-waterloo-13294>
- [3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/11/15/fda-scott-gottlieb-md-rightly-warns-public-about-kratom-12150>
- [4] <https://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/Labeling/ucm394909.htm>
- [5] <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-prediabetes-diabetes-pharma-epidemic-perspec-0801-jm-20160729-story.html>
- [6] <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm620185.htm>
- [7] <http://video.foxnews.com/v/5837704634001/?#sp=show-clips>
- [8] [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6722a3.htm#F1\\_down](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6722a3.htm#F1_down)
- [9] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/05/01/fda-stop-selling-nicotine-liquid-juice-boxes-and-whipped-cream-canisters-12909>
- [10] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYuyS1Oq8gY&feature=youtu.be>
- [11] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbCyPBZYdWk>
- [12] <http://reason.com/blog/2017/09/07/fixating-on-adolescent-vaping-could-be-d>