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Local Health Partners Ask Madison Co. Families to Engage Teens, Prevent Nicotine Use  
Nicotine use is increasing due to pandemic stress, but alternative coping skills can help

LONDON, OH (Feb. 25, 2020) – Nicotine use is rising in Madison County, concerning health officials, especially during Covid-19. Covid-19 commonly attacks the lungs, meaning that inhalants of any kind (including Juuling, vaping and smoking) can lead to increased risk of complications and death. Preventing nicotine use, especially in teens, starts at home.

Part of the rise in nicotine use across adults in the region can be attributed to increased stress and anxiety due to the pandemic, in addition to the malaise commonly brought on by the cold and dark winter season. But nicotine may add to feelings of stress and anxiety, rather than help.

“It’s a common misconception that smoking or using tobacco products can alleviate stress. Nicotine is a stimulant, and therefore will increase feelings of anxiety – making you feel worse. The withdrawal from nicotine is the release that most people feel,” said Amanda Hampton, manager of Madison County Prevention.

Teens are particularly at risk for increased nicotine use during this time as a lack of school structure, socialization and other activities can lead them to seek entertainment in drugs and alcohol. Parents should also not disregard that teens are observing adults’ increased drug and alcohol use, which can influence teens to pursue substance use themselves.

Fortunately, parents can set a good example for the entire family by eliminating or reducing drug and alcohol use at home, and by engaging teens in family activities. Studies show that teens in families more likely to do things together are less likely to use substances.

Parents also can lead by example to show their teens how to effectively manage stress and use healthy coping skills rather than turning to nicotine or other substances.

“Managing stress this year is a top priority. People who take proactive steps to manage their stress, whether it’s learning to set boundaries, investing more time in relationships and personal growth or seeking out help from mental health specialists, tend to see better health overall,” said Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB. “By including teens in the process, and engaging them in activities, these positive outcomes can be shared across the entire family.”

One example of how families can engage their teens, according to Dr. Mayer, is to make lists of skills, talents or activities to do or learn together, and setting aside time to dedicate to those tasks.

Dr. Mayer provided these additional resources for parents and teens interested in learning more about how to manage stress and reduce nicotine use in their communities:

- For adults, turn to the Clark Greene Madison Warmline instead of a cigarette when things get tough. Call 937-662-9080 to talk to a peer supporter for free, 24/7.
- Teens who struggle with nicotine use and need support can talk through their problems with a specialist by texting 'DITCHJUUL' to 88709
- Teens and adults can reach round-the-clock crisis support from Crisis Text Line by texting '4HOPE' to 741-741
- Additional crisis support is available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255
- To learn more about coping skills, visit [www.mhanational.org/covid19/wellness-coping-skills](http://www.mhanational.org/covid19/wellness-coping-skills) or [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov).

In addition, Madison County Prevention is offering the following free virtual events:

- Stanford VAPE to increase knowledge about basic facts of e-cigarettes and the harm they cause will be offered Apr. 27 from 6 to 7 p.m. Sign up at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stanford-vape-tickets-142259410727>
- Parent stressors and coping techniques is a fun, interactive and creative workshop to help parents identify stressors and develop coping skills. It is offered May 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. Sign up at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/parent-stressors-coping-techniques-tickets-142260006509>

If you're interested in joining a community-focused initiative to reduce the effects of substance use, depression and suicide, contact Erin Fawley at [efawley@madisonpublichealth.org](mailto:efawley@madisonpublichealth.org) and ask about joining the We C.A.R.E. Coalition. The Coalition meets the third Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m., and currently is conducting meetings virtually.

For more information about mental health and substance use resources in Clark, Greene and Madison counties, please visit the MHRB website at [www.mhrb.org](http://www.mhrb.org). For more information about smoking cessation, please visit the MCPH website at [www.co.madison.us/services/public\\_health](http://www.co.madison.us/services/public_health).

### **ABOUT MHRB**

Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) assists partners, stakeholders, residents, and anyone at risk of mental health or substance use concerns in our three-county area, providing pathways to mental health and addiction services. In collaboration with more than 20 care providers, the board advocates for the mental health needs and facilitates delivery of quality care for all ages, regardless of income or ability to pay.

### **ABOUT MCPH**

Madison County Public Health is the local health department serving Madison County. MCPH is committed to monitoring and responding to their community's health and wellness needs through innovative services, education, collaboration and compassionate care.

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