



Exposure Trends During the COVID-19 Pandemic

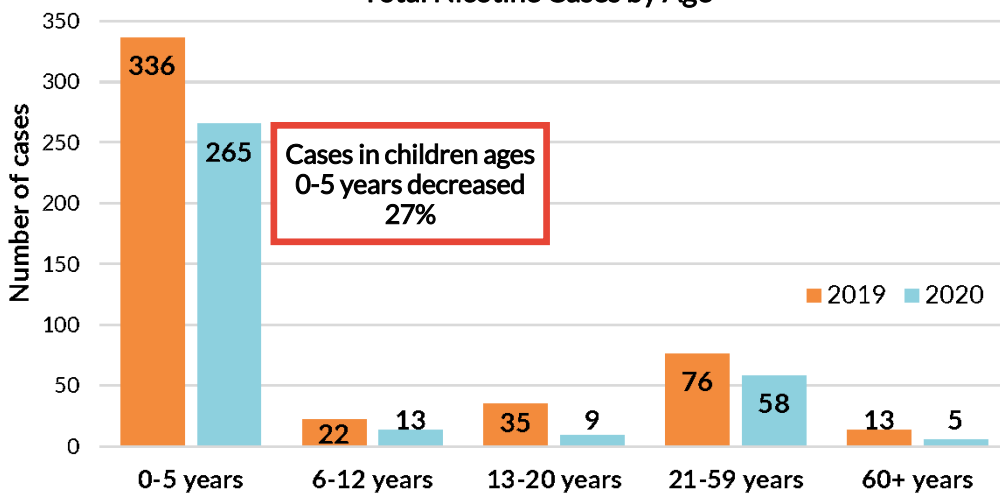
Special Focus: Nicotine

Issued December 8, 2020 | Contact mryuk@wpc.org with questions

The following data compares poison exposures involving **nicotine** that were reported to the Washington Poison Center during the first 9 months of 2020 (January 1 – September 30) to those reported in the first 9 months of 2019. Some cases may involve more than one type of nicotine exposure.

Washington State’s “Tobacco 21” law went into effect January 1, 2020, making it illegal to sell tobacco and vaping products to people under the age of 21. While we cannot draw specific conclusions from our data, this law – along with other strategies – may have contributed to the decrease in nicotine exposures. This trend offers encouragement during the heightened concern of substance use to cope with increased isolation and stress during COVID-19 pandemic.

Total Nicotine Cases by Age

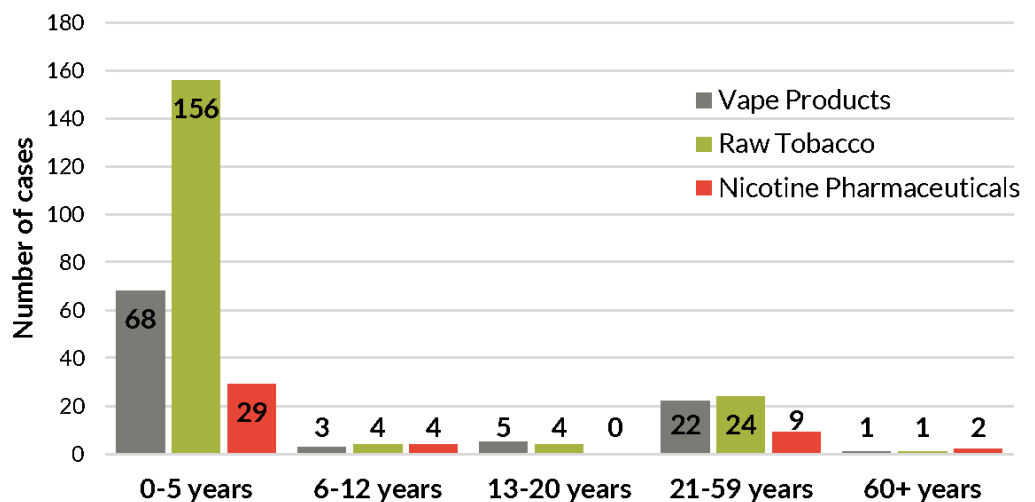


Cases in children ages 0-5 years decreased 27%

Of the 351 nicotine exposures in 2020:

- 70% (245 exposures) were due to ingestion in children ages 0-5 years
- 48 exposures across all ages were due to inhalation (vaping or smoking)

Nicotine Product Exposures by Age Group, 2020



Approximately 1/3 of vape product exposures involved flavored liquids; 24 of which were in children ages 0-5 years

- In 2020, at least 24 exposures in children ages 0-5 years involved nicotine products being stored within sight of the child
- Safely and securely store all nicotine products in the home: out of reach and out of sight, preferably locked up.

Since January 1, 2020, when the poison center was called first, 93% of patients with nicotine exposures were managed at home by WAPC specialists. Keeping these patients out of the emergency department saved approximately \$284,000 patient dollars.

Disclaimer: Reporting of exposures to the Washington Poison Center is voluntary and not mandated by law. As such, these data reflect only the exposures reported to the Washington Poison Center, and are most likely an underrepresentation of the true occurrence of any one substance.

