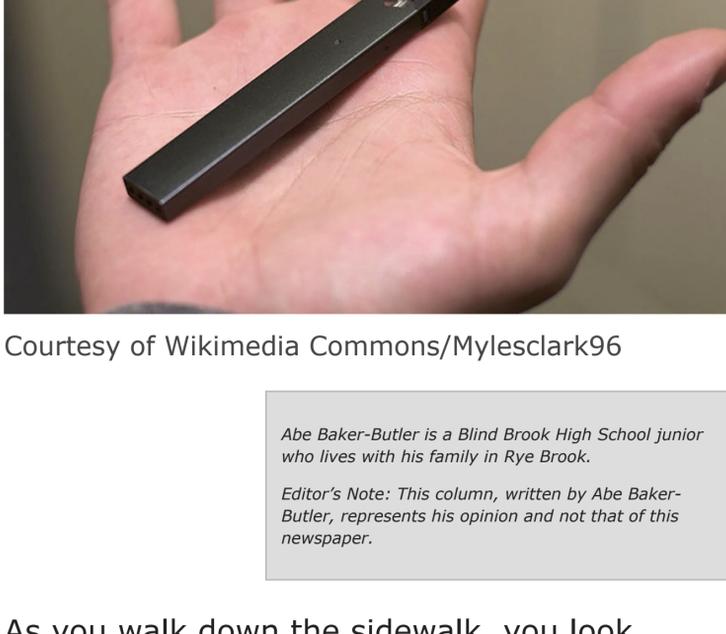


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## Honestly Abe: No gems, Juuls pose a threat to youth

By Abe Baker-Butler

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*Editor's Note: This column, written by Abe Baker-Butler, represents his opinion and not that of this newspaper.*

As you walk down the sidewalk, you look to the ground and notice a small, metallic rectangle emitting a quizzical, slightly sweet and fruity smell.

Unbeknownst to you, you have stumbled upon a Juul, a popular brand of e-cigarette (or vape), which contains a metal coil powered by a battery connected to a liquid-filled Juul pod. When the coil heats up, the liquid turns into a vapor that can be inhaled. The Juul, which resembles a flash drive, has grown in popularity largely due to its sleek design, portability, and ease of concealment. While originally created to help cigarette smokers quit, the Juul is now a phenomenon among high school and middle school students. According to a Westchester-wide survey analysis by Student Assistance Services (SAS) Corp., 12% of eighth graders, 22% of 10th graders, and 31% of 12th graders reported use of Juul or other e-cigarette brands in the last 30 days, while only 1.1-5.8% reported use of traditional cigarettes over the same period. Unlike the smoke of a cigarette, the vapor of a Juul is hard to detect, which makes it easier to clandestinely smoke in classrooms, bathrooms, and other school locations.

Why is this a problem? Because Juuls pose a potentially serious, poorly understood health threat. Among teenagers and adults, a gross misperception persists that the impairment effects of Juuls and other e-cigarettes are temporary. This is simply not the case: the 2016 Surgeon General's report reveals that the brain continues to develop well into one's 20's, as well as that e-cigarettes and related addiction impair brain development and academic performance. Additionally, studies have indicated that 63% of Juul users do not even realize that e-cigarettes contain nicotine, but a single Juul pod has a nicotine concentration equivalent to that in an entire pack of cigarettes, making it even more addictive.

But perhaps more dangerous than the nicotine in Juuls and other e-cigarettes is the plethora of poorly disclosed, insufficiently researched, and harmful chemicals present in the Juul pod. These include, according to the Surgeon General, "ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, flavorants such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to serious lung disease...[and]...heavy metals, such as nickel, tin, and lead."

And what specific problems can these chemicals cause? To name a few, severe lung cancer, decreased immunity, inhibited brain development, and popcorn lung. Popcorn lung, caused by the Juul vapor chemical component diacetyl, is an extreme obstructive respiratory disease that can cause cough, fever, shortness of breath, unexplained exhaustion, and can become disabling over time. The disease causes scarring and disfigurement of the bronchioles, which restricts the movement of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the lungs and can lead to death.

Moreover, due to the relative novelty of e-cigarettes compared to traditional cigarettes, little longitudinal research has been performed to elucidate the long-term effects of the chemicals in their vapor. Only time will tell what other medical conditions they may cause.

One reason for Juul's massive appeal among teenagers is flavoring: each Juul pod comes in an enticing flavor such as "Crème Brûlée," "Cool Cucumber," or "Fruit Medley." Although Juul claims its products do not target youth and are created exclusively for smokers trying to quit, these flavor names evoke imagery reminiscent of fresh fruits, verdant vegetables, and delectable desserts in a way clearly designed to expand Juul's marketing reach. In fact, a review study conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill found that tobacco products were more appealing to current and prospective users when they had pleasant flavors, with teens and tweens especially attracted to fruit and candy-flavored products.

If you or anyone you know is thinking of trying Juul or other e-cigarettes, make sure they know the facts: tell them to visit [truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org) where they can find credible sources detailing the myriad negative health effects of e-cigarettes. If someone you know needs help quitting e-cigarettes or another addictive substance, visit the New York Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) or federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) websites to find resources. If you are interested in learning more about hands-on local prevention efforts, join the Blind Brook Community Coalition or Port Chester Cares, which both provide resources to help keep students drug and alcohol free, as well as to educate community members about substance-use issues affecting youth. Visit [blindbrookcoalition.org](http://blindbrookcoalition.org) or [portchestercares.org](http://portchestercares.org) to see how you can get involved.

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