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Dentists warn of vaping dangers

EXCLUSIVE

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Dentists are increasingly seeing the side effects of vaping in their patients' mouths, including stained teeth, gum disease, bad breath, tooth decay and in extreme cases wounds from exploding e-cigarettes.

Dental clinicians said the impacts of e-cigarette use was especially increasing among young people and teenagers as their use soared amid a thriving black market.

Pitt Street Dental Centre principal surgeon Michael Cai said the impact of vaping on teeth was just as horrible as smoking and he'd seen two patients after their vapes exploded, leaving chemical burns on their mouths and gums.

"One of the explosions was so bad it broke off two lower front teeth, it was pretty horrible," said Dr Cai. "The patient ended up having dental implants and they are costly."

Dr Cai said nicotine vaping products reduced saliva, which protects the mouth, increased the risk of decay and gum disease, increased the risk of complications from dental surgeries as well as the artificial colours staining teeth.

ADA NSW President Rohan Krishan, who operates a dentistry on Sydney's north shore, said often patients in their late teens were reluctant to disclose they had been vaping in front of their parents.

"Teenagers are coming in with their parents and we quite routinely find out they have been vaping," he said.

"A lot of them vape and transition into cigarette smoking, which of course we all know the harmful effects of smoking cigarettes as well. That's also a concern for us, we see them vaping and then using that as a gateway towards actually smoking cigarettes and we see that in our practice as well."

A study published last week in the Journal of the American Dental Association found people who vaped or used e-cigarettes were at higher risk of developing cavities but more research was needed to confirm a link.

Australian Dental Association spokeswoman Sue Ching-Yeoh said it was difficult to confirm the direct effect of vaping on teeth but said the mouth drying side effect led to mouth infections and tooth decay.

"We end up with a very fragile lining of the mouth and you get all sorts of infections like fungal infections, bacterial infections in the mouth because it is dry," she said. "Teeth tend to decay faster in a mouth that's dry and people are more susceptible to gum shrinking."

Paramount Dental Sydney surgeon Amrinder Oberoi said his clients who were increasingly presenting with stained teeth and dry mouths as the popularity of e-cigarettes soared.

Vapes containing nicotine can be easily purchased from tobacconists and convenience stores around Australia despite laws introduced by the former Coalition government in October 2021 that require users to have a prescription.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration on Wednesday opened a consultation process on possible amendments to the regulations around vapes, including toughening border laws and introducing quality and safety standards.