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The Little Hawk

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Mission Statement

The Little Hawk, student journalism newspaper and website of City High School,

aims to inform, educate and entertain readers. LH journalists follow the code of the journalist by seeking truth, doing no harm, being independent, and working toward balance in all news stories. All student

voices are encouraged to be part of an LH journalism class. To join the class talk to your guidance counselor today.

Letters to the editor may be submitted to: LittleHawkPage@gmail.com

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STAFF EDITORIAL

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Nicotine use among teens can cause an unhappy future

Writing a story about nicotine use for a high school publication is an interesting topic to tackle since a percentage of the audience most likely uses some form of nicotine. However, for years the adolescent world has been plagued by the hook of nicotine products. The latest, smoothest device or newest flavor don't help our generation. I remember first hearing about e-cigarettes as the Juul about 5 years ago, and since the face of vaping has only grown.

The fact is the same issue perverts today's younger minds, but with a new name and face: Esco Bar, Puff Bar, Mr. Fog, Breeze, Dragbar, the list goes on. All these products promise the same things: newer and refreshing flavors, a quick 5 minute "buzz", and of course facets of nicotine addiction. The design of the products doesn't help for marketing toward teens either. Exciting sounding flavors like blue razzleberry pomegranate, pink burst and other fruit or candy based flavors along with vibrant, "fun" colors offer the products in a positive light.

In the National Youth Tobacco Survey conducted in 2021, approximately 34% of high school students and 11% of junior high school students reported ever having used tobacco products. Current use numbers sat at 13.5% for high school and 4% for middle schoolers. With these numbers on the rise every year, there is obviously concern for the future of students' health.

"I don't even really like vaping anymore, it just gets me through my day and has become a habit." Says one anonymous City High student, "I've been trying to quit but it's been so hard." Teenagers using nicotine products are even more susceptible to addiction as the brain isn't fully developed and can easily grow a reliance on anything

seemingly "stress-relieving." Long term use effects can include permanent lowering of impulse control, harming to attention learning and control, and even mood disorders.

The reason teens are in high jeopardy of nicotine addiction goes beyond "the brain is still developing." Adolescents' brains fire synapses quicker than adult brains, this is because the brain is still learning. Younger brains learn quicker than adult ones, and when exposed to nicotine they learn to become dependent on the substance. When nicotine enters the bloodstream and reaches the brain, it latches on the brain's receptors of dopamine neurons, causing unnatural levels of dopamine to be released, which in turn causes the "high" or "buzz" that is so appealing. This dependence is dangerous and unhealthy to say the least, for both long term and short period use.

Taking a break from consistent nicotine use can cause withdrawal symptoms. This is a large reason quitting the addiction can be so hard. Up to 3 days after not using nicotine is when withdrawals peak, but everyone is different and it may be more. Withdrawing can include feelings of anxiety or irritability, intense cravings for nicotine, going out of one's way for nicotine, and even trouble sleeping. No one wants to feel those symptoms, but even worse would be the daily dependence on an unhealthy and toxic substance that can cause extreme damage to yourself. The withdrawals and benefits of not being addicted far outweigh the danger of being dependent on the toxic chemicals. The positive side is there's a solution: nicotine withdrawals disappear usually within 2-4 weeks, and once they're gone, the brain begins to rewire itself; the addiction fades.

"I started vaping because so many people around me started doing it, it started with using theirs and then eventually I bought my own," said another anonymous City High student, "I'm not addicted or anything though."

Recently, City High has implemented nicotine and vape detectors into the bathrooms. These devices don't seem to completely discourage students, but they're a good start to doing more for suppressing nicotine use among students. Once students can begin to realize all the negative effects of using nicotine, both long-term and short, it becomes clear that using these unhealthy little devices is not a good idea.