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SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

CHILD VAPE

» Mirror probe sees 14-year-old purchase four e-cigs in hour

» Doc calls for the state to get tough on sellers



HARMFUL Boy with the vapes he purchased for our investigation

BY FERGHAL BLANEY

KIDS can buy vapes laced with nicotine and anti-freeze with ease - because there is no law on selling them to under 18s.

As part of an Irish Mirror investigation, a 14-year-old boy openly purchased four disposable devices in an hour from several outlets.

It comes as teachers say there is an "epidemic" of vaping in schools, with seven kids treated in hospital in Ireland due to vapes last year.

Cancer consultant Professor John Crown said: "Authorities must come down like a ton of bricks on anyone selling these to children."

FULL STORY: PAGES 4&5

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MIRROR INVESTIGATES: SITTING ON PUBLIC HEALTH TIME BOMB?

Time to smoke out vapes



“A new generation is becoming hooked on nicotine

MICHEAL MARTIN
TANAISTE, YESTERDAY

» We discover how easy it is for kids to buy ‘pen’ devices

» Senior docs demand ban on the disposables used by teens

» Legislation on way to bar throw-away products now

CHILD’S PLAY
Youngster with vapes he bought for our investigation



Seven
vape-related hospital admissions last year – there were none in 2021

Ten
Age of some children reported to be regular vape users



DEATH’S DOOR Sarah Griffin in coma and, right, with mum Mary

Sarah, 12, in coma after inhaling filth

BY LAUREN HARTE

A MUM has told how her daughter was admitted to ICU and put in an induced coma after she had been vaping.

Mary Griffin and Sarah, 12, are speaking out in support of a new vaping awareness campaign by Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke.

Mary, from North Belfast, said: “I was taking my other two children to school when Sarah rang and said, ‘Come back mummy, I don’t feel well’.

“I got home, gave Sarah her inhaler and nebuliser again and she seemed to settle.

“A while later I popped out to the shop quickly and Sarah rang again, this time completely out of breath, barely able to string a sentence together, saying, ‘I need a doctor or to go to hospital’.

“Her dad immediately took her to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

“The next thing I knew, Sarah’s dad phoned me to say Sarah was in Resus [resuscitation unit].

“She was on oxygen and was linked up to all sorts of machines.

“There were medical staff all around her assessing her and they said she needed to go

to ICU as she was deteriorating very quickly.

“When we got to ICU the team worked on Sarah for four-and-a-half hours before having to put her into an induced coma.

“I had to help and hold Sarah’s hands to try and settle her so the doctors could do what they needed to do. I was frightened and it was horrible to have to see Sarah so scared.

“The doctors said if Sarah hadn’t been vaping, she would have been in a better position to fight off the infection.

“Vaping had left her lungs very weak. The doctors said if she had got to hospital any later the outcome would have been entirely different.”

Fidelma Carter, head of public health at NICHHS, said: “Many people may think there is little risk with regular vaping.

“The big misunderstanding about vapes is they are harmless compared to cigs.

“This is not true and this message needs to change to prevent more young people from taking up and getting addicted to vaping.

“The long-term health implications are unknown, as they once were with tobacco.

“We need to cull vaping until we have more research knowledge on the long-term health implications.”

BY LARISSA NOLAN and FERGHAL BLANEY

CHILDREN can buy vapes with shocking ease, an Irish Mirror expose has revealed.

This 14-year-old boy openly purchased four disposable devices in an hour – because there is NO LAW on selling them to under 18s.

Ireland is one of the last countries in the world that has not yet banned their sale to kids.

He bought brightly-coloured, sweet flavoured vape pens as easily as lollipops in a corner shop, a dedicated vape outlet and two phone stores in Dublin.

Despite it not being illegal, a

number of the main supermarkets asked for age ID and refused the sale.

Our special investigation also found seven children were put in hospital last year due to vaping, one with anti-freeze poisoning.

We also learned primary schools see young kids with the devices while principals report most teens use the devices.

Our probe also confirmed plans to introduce a raft of laws before the end of the year to regulate sale and protect kids. Paediatricians

APPALLED Senior doctors Prof Des Cox & Prof John Crown



call for an outright ban on disposable vapes. Cancer consultant Prof John Crown said authorities must “come down like a ton of bricks” on anyone selling nicotine to children.

He added: “This is straight out of Big Tobacco’s playbook, which can be summed in four words – ‘Addict Kids To Carcinogens’.

“This needs to be regulated within an inch of its life.”

Teachers say the failure to ban their sale to kids has caused an “epidemic” of vaping in schools with kids as young as 10 or 11 already

hooked on nicotine. A single disposable vape, which may only last users a day, can contain as much nicotine as 40 cigarettes.

Tanaiste Micheal Martin, who led the war on smoking while Health Minister, described the alarming rise of teenage vaping as: “appalling”.

He told the Irish Mirror: “A new generation is being hooked on nicotine. It’s as addictive, if not more so, than heroin. The tobacco industry targeted children in an earlier era. Get them young and you have a market for a long time.

“They’re being sold like sweets, with colours and flavours. Society needs to get real here. Legislation is key.” Mr

Martin, who enacted landmark laws banning smoking in public places in 2004, says the imminent Public Health (Tobacco Products/Nicotine Inhaling Products) Bill 2023 will ban their sale to anyone under 18.

It will licence the industry and bring in laws around their sale at events for children and in vending machines.

Those found in breach will face fines up to €500,000 and/or six months imprisonment.

The Bill goes to committee stage this week and once passed, will come into effect with 90 days notice to the European Union.

However, child health experts say we need to go further and ban dispos-

able vapes, which are the choice of the vast majority of teens who e-cigs. The Faculty of Paediatrics at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland has also called for a ban on bright colours and sweetie flavours, which are designed to appeal to kids.

They warn nicotine has toxic effects on the developing brain, as well as triggering breathing problems and deadly lung diseases such as COPD.

Department of Health figures released to the Irish Mirror show how the number of people being admitted to hospital have risen alongside the popularity of disposable vapes.

While there were none in 2020 and 2021, there were seven in 2022. Data

for 2023 is not available but experts expect another increase. Des Cox, consultant in paediatric respiratory medicine, is leading the Faculty of Paediatrics’ drive to ban disposables.

He said: “The legislation is not enough to curb teen vaping. It has exploded. That’s why we are calling for a ban on disposable vapes.

“The flavours and colours are designed to attract them, ban that.

“It is a very bad idea for young people with developing lungs and brains to be exposed to nicotine.

“We’re seeing asthma attacks and acute symptoms. There will be damage to the lungs, long term. You are more likely to develop COPD if you

vape early in life. We’re not seeing large volumes of kids coming into A&E with vaping issues but we are seeing them.”

Peter Creedon, principal of Colaiste Dun Iascaigh in Tipperary, said one of his students had to be rushed to hospital with a form of anti-freeze poisoning after taking too much vape.

He added: “We had to get an ambulance, it was touch and go. The toxicology found there was an

element in the product that was similar to anti-freeze. It’s hard for schools to monitor as they are the size of memory sticks.

“First Years are vaping and I wouldn’t be surprised if 50 to 60% of senior students tried it.”

Patrick McCormack, principal of The Brunner CBS in Dublin’s North Brunswick Street, said: “It’s a worry



DANGEROUS
Teenager vaping

TOMORROW: MICHEAL MARTIN ON IRELAND’S CHILD VAPING CRISIS

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