Secondhand E-cigarette Aerosol and Children

E-cigarettes are electronic, handheld devices that heat e-liquid (a fluid that often contains water, nicotine, and flavorings). When heated, e-liquid turns into an aerosol (vapor) that users inhale. Secondhand aerosol can be harmful to non-users, like children.

What’s in Secondhand Aerosol?¹,²
E-liquid aerosol is not just water vapor. It may contain:

- Nicotine, the addictive drug in regular cigarettes
- Propylene glycol, often used in food products and medicines
- Vegetable glycerin, often used in food products and cosmetics
- Flavorings, like menthol and diacetyl

What are the Risks?
Secondhand aerosol can expose non-users, like children, to harmful things such as:³

- Cancer-causing toxins:³
  - Formaldehyde: Used in embalming fluid
  - Benzene: Found in rubber cement

- Metals and chemicals:³
  - Cadmium: Used to make batteries
  - Lead: Once used in paint
  - Toluene: Found in paint thinners

- Heated propylene glycol
  - Short-term exposure may cause eye, throat, and airway irritation.⁴
  - Long-term exposure can result in children getting asthma.⁵

How to Keep Children Safe
- If you use e-cigarettes, stop. Californians can get free help with quitting at 1-800-NO-BUTTS.
- Keep your personal space aerosol-free.
  - Ask people not to use e-cigarettes in your home or car. Going to another room, or opening windows, is not enough.
  - Insist that no one use e-cigarettes around your children. Be firm. Your children’s health is important.
- In California, it is illegal to use e-cigarettes where tobacco use is not allowed.⁶
  - For example, it is against the law to use e-cigarettes in cars if anyone is under 18 years old.
- Take a pledge to protect yourself and your home from the dangers of secondhand e-cigarette aerosol.

References: