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**NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM INCREASES STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE  
OF E-CIGARETTE DANGERS, CUTS INTENDED USE**

*CATCH Global Foundation and UTHealth School of Public Health Launches First-Ever  
Youth E-Cigarette Prevention Program*

AUSTIN – On the heels of a new U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rule taking effect this summer extending the agency's authority to regulate E-cigarettes, a first-of-its-kind program is being rolled out to middle schools across the country to address the recent spike in youth E-cigarette use.

New data from a survey of students participating in a test run of the CATCH My Breath Youth E-Cigarette Prevention Program increased students' awareness about the dangers of E-cigarette use, and 86 percent of students said they were less likely to use E-cigarettes as a result of the curriculum.

The program was developed by the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health. As founding partners of the CATCH Global Foundation, The University of Texas School of Public Health and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center support distribution of CATCH My Breath to middle schools around the country.

"Youth E-cigarette use is quickly becoming a public health emergency," said Steven Kelder, Ph.D., MPH, who created the program and is co-director of the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. "While those of us in the public health sector should cheer loudly about the decline in cigarette use among children, youth are increasingly turning to E-cigarette use instead. E-cigarettes have their own host of health and developmental impacts on youth that can last well into adulthood. Contrary to public opinion, E-cigarettes are not harmless. E-cigarettes deliver nicotine, which is addictive, and contain other harmful toxins. Nicotine exposure by the fetus, children and adolescents can have permanent developmental consequences."

A CATCH survey of middle school educators conducted in January 2016 found that 86 percent of schools surveyed don't have an E-cigarette prevention curriculum. This survey also discovered that 74 percent of middle school educators rate the importance of E-cigarette prevention as a youth health issue as "high," but 80 percent rate their own knowledge of E-cigarettes as "medium" or "low."

In May, 2,255 students from 26 schools across five states participated in a pilot test of the CATCH My Breath program, which targets sixth- to eighth-graders. Students from 15 schools completed both pre- and post-test surveys.

Data from the pilot program show:

- 91 percent of surveyed teachers participating in the pilot program said they felt confident in their ability to teach the CATCH My Breath lessons.
- 82 percent of surveyed students participating in the pilot program said they will look at E-cigarette advertising differently from now on.
- 70 percent of surveyed students participating in the pilot program said they discussed what they learned from CATCH My Breath with friends or family.
- 68 percent of 28 surveyed teachers participating in the pilot program said their students liked the CATCH My Breath lessons.

“CATCH My Breath clarified how E-cigarettes work and the chemicals in them, and it was helpful to me because I didn't know too much about them either,” said Valerie Phillips, a physical education teacher and coach at CD Fulkes Middle School in Round Rock. “It also gave the kids a chance to explore reasons why people start using E-cigarettes in the first place and to identify other things to do besides smoke.”

Three million middle and high school students were current users of e-cigarettes in 2015 — up from 2.46 million in 2014, according to data from the 2015 National Youth Tobacco Survey, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“E-cigarettes are quickly becoming the tobacco product of choice among adolescents, but currently there is a lack of education and prevention programs specifically targeted at E-cigarettes,” said Duncan Van Dusen, executive director at the Austin-based CATCH Global Foundation. “That's concerning because nicotine is a highly addictive drug and the purchase and use of E-cigarettes by minors is prohibited. Our CATCH My Breath program gives middle school educators the tools they need to educate our children about the dangers of E-cigarettes before they become hooked.”

CATCH My Breath is designed to help prevent the initiation of E-cigarette use among pre-teens and teens. It educates students on the facts about E-cigarettes, increases their awareness of deceptive advertising campaigns and gives them the tools to resist peer pressure.

E-cigarettes often contain nicotine, which has been shown to impair cognition and learning in adolescents. Research has shown that adolescence is a sensitive period for the development of brain circuits that regulate cognition and emotion, and a time when teens and pre-teens are particularly vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and tobacco. Early evidence suggests that nicotine in E-cigarettes primes the brain to desire other addictive drugs, including conventional cigarettes, which are known to cause disease and lead to premature death.

Visit <http://www.catchmybreath.org> or email [ecigs@catchglobalfoundation.org](mailto:ecigs@catchglobalfoundation.org) to learn more about the CATCH My Breath Youth E-Cigarette Prevention Program.

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***About the CATCH Global Foundation***

*The CATCH Global Foundation is a 501(c)3 public charity founded in 2014. Our mission is to improve children's health worldwide by developing, disseminating and sustaining the CATCH platform in collaboration with researchers at UTHealth. The Foundation links underserved*

*schools and communities to the resources necessary to create and sustain healthy change for future generations.*