

# Healthcare is selfcare.

## THE PODCAST



### Transcript - Episode 11: Vaping risks: You don't want this smoke.

**Aloysius Ballard** *Host*

**Randy Roth, MD** *Inpatient Physician, Chief Medical Officer*

**Ballard:** If there's one thing we've learned it's that taking care of ourselves is key. And there are a lot of ways to do that. Selfcare has come to mean taking time for the things that make us happy, for the things that make us feel good, and for the things that keep us healthy. Healthcare is Selfcare: The Podcast presented by Singer River Health System focuses on candid conversations with medical professionals aimed at improving health and saving lives. So sit back, grab a cup of coffee, and prioritize you.

I am your host, Aloysius Ballard. I am the digital coordinator here at Singing River Health System. And I have another amazing guest. One of my favorite people here in the system, and has been a great mentor and friend since I joined Singing River. Go ahead and introduce yourself.

**Roth:** Hey, good morning. This is Randy Roth here. And I'm the Chief Medical Officer at Singing River Health System. I'm an Internal Medicine Physician and happy to be a part of my first official podcast!

**Ballard:** Dr. Roth, I couldn't be more enthused and happy to have you here. I brought you here today... You know, you could talk about a number of things, but I want to talk about something that our community is seeing a lot of, which is vaping. So can you tell me: How does vaping work?

**Roth:** Sure. So, you know, a lot of people think that if they vape, it's a lot safer and it may be a way to quit smoking traditional cigarettes. What I'm saying, cause I have six kids, is there are some people that use vaping as a bridge to stop smoking. But a lot of students, and a lot of young guys and gals that vape never smoked to begin

with. And they have to understand that just because it's not a cigarette, it can be potentially dangerous. It has nicotine in it. Nicotine is addictive. That's the addictive stuff that's in cigarettes.

So I tell people all the time, if you're not going to smoke, vaping is not the answer. It's not good for you, especially in underdeveloped kids like the sixth, seventh, or eighth graders—the impact on the brain, the impact on making bad decisions. It's like if someone goes out one night and they drink four beers and they drive fast on the way home, you know, what they put in their body is maybe helping them make bad decisions. So I'm a big anti-vape guy. I don't think there's a reason to do that. And I'm trying to get the word out that you don't know what you're putting in your body. And I'm sure we can talk about that. It's a totally unregulated business, and I'm here to help people make good decisions.

**Ballard:** So let's talk about the actual results of what vaping does. You're inhaling this chemical that honestly, we don't know what's in it, truthfully. But what health concerns are you seeing with people who are vaping?

**Roth:** Sure. The biggest thing that worries me about vaping is unless it's in a closed container like the Juul—you kind of know what's in there. But it is nicotine and nicotine's addictive. It is sure to create developmental birth delays with pregnancy. It's not a good drug. It's why the surgeon general has a box on cigarettes that it can cause death and lead to heart disease and lung disease.

Secondly is—anytime you put something in your

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body and you inhale it, it goes to your lungs. There are cases we've seen locally, and obviously nationally, of what's called popcorn lung. They inhale and vape something in and maybe they cut the liquid with talc or maybe they cut it with another foreign substance and they come in the emergency room or they can't breathe. You get a chest x-ray that looks like it's totally whited out. So I try to tell the young guys that I talk to and school kids that I talk to is if I gave you an empty cup and it had a red substance in it, and I said, "Drink it", wouldn't you ask me what it is? What's so nice about going to a vaping store and saying, I'll take the cotton candy flavor vape—we'll talk about the flavors in a minute—and think that you're getting something that's not going to harm you. And I just tell people to be smart. You have one body and anything that you put in your body that God didn't put in there, is probably not a good thing.

**Ballard:** Now, I'm glad you mentioned the flavors, because if you look at the packaging of most of the stuff that vaping consists of is geared towards things kids will like—bubble gum, sour grape, or watermelon—all these flavors that seem harmless. Some would say that the more fruity, the less addictive or harmful. What do you say to that?

**Roth:** Well, it's not the case. It's the same level nicotine across the board in all these flavors. A lot of things I will say about this industry is they're smart. They know how to get teens and adolescents hooked. So if you don't like the smell of a cigarette or conventional vaping, or your parents may not, but you like cotton candy or you like watermelon or cheesecake and you can get that flavor—they are targeting specifically these young kids, and that's why they become addicted. And that's exactly what the industry wants. We spoke earlier a little bit about whether I would advocate somebody smoking a Pall Mall Light versus vaping and if pushed to make that answer, I would say I'd rather you vape. But my third part of that scenario is I'd say don't do either one of them, find another

healthy alternative. That's kind of what I try to spread.

**Ballard:** Now, a lot of parents out here that may be listening to the podcast may say Dr. Roth, how do we even know what our kids are ingesting? What should we be looking for? Is it odorless? What does it smell like? Is there certain things that parents could be on the lookout for to make sure their kids aren't going into the vaping habit?

**Roth:** That's a good question. I think the first thing is that you have to know what it looks like. And I've known you for years. I'm not the biggest technological guru. So the first time I saw the vaping thing, I thought it was a USB port. And I'm thinking, man, the kids are on the computer all the time, but it's kind of not what it looks like, so know what the modality itself looks like and a lot of times when you see them around, it looks like a USB port and they're just, you know, licking that or they're doing something like that.

It is much less detectable by our noses if they use unflavored, just regular vaping stuff. So in the old days, when you go out and you smoke a cigarette, you'd walk into a bar and you came home. Your parents would sniff the air, and obviously, know you've been smoking. The flavored stuff tends to stick around.

I think the best way to deal with this is just talk to your kids—your adolescents, your teenagers, your adult friends that vape and say, are you doing this? And if you are, why? And are you aware of the consequences? You know, vaping could lead to you going down the THC path and that's still illegal in state of Mississippi. If you buy on the street or drinking more and getting addicted to something that you don't need to be successful. Peer pressure is out there—that's the other thing I talk to my teens about, and I still have four teens in the house. You know what makes this attractive to you? If you go to a function, or you go to the river and everybody's vaping—do you feel that peer pressure to do that? And that's the real deal

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and that's probably the biggest reason students or younger people vape.

**Ballard:** Now, I don't want this to seem like it's just a teenage issue. One of the things that I researched was that a lot of adults feel like vaping can help them quit regular, traditional smoking. Is there a benefit to that, or is it all still harmful?

**Roth:** There is some truth to that. When someone smokes, let's say, two packs a day and they're also getting not just the nicotine but the other carcinogens, the tar you see in the picture of these lungs and mice that smoke in there, all black. Vaping is a cleaner alternative. Do I think it's safer? I do think if somebody came to me and said, "Dr. Roth, I mean, they're going to smoke two packs a day or I'm going to take two vials a day. Which one is best for me?" I would say neither, but I'd go to selection number two. There are less carcinogens and less badness that you inhale, especially in some of these older cigarettes. I mean, believe it or not, there's still some unfiltered cigarettes where you're literally inhaling the backside of a tobacco leaf and anything that went on that plant. So there is some truth to that. I have a lot of friends that I've heard had been long term smokers and they have transitioned to vaping and they've asked me the same question. I'd say, let's try to get the vaping off and find another healthy alternative.

**Ballard:** So if someone has actually come across the fact of their family member or child vaping, is there a lot of concern considering like popcorn lungs, or what should you be on the lookout for health wise? Should you send them in to get a checkup or is it something that like if they just did once or twice, they're okay?

**Roth:** I think if somebody came to me again as a parent of six and said, look, I saw your 15 year old vape once in the past four years, I probably wouldn't be overly concerned. I would go to them and say, "do you know what you're smoking? Do you know what you're inhaling? Do you understand that it's not FDA regulated for the most part, that what

you're putting in your body could be harmful?" And in these days where they're lacing stuff with who knows what—I mean, how many cases do we see of unintentional overdoses where someone thinks they're taking one thing and then we get a toxicology screen and it's laced with heroin or fentanyl or THC. So that's one thing. I think it's just about open dialog and not just with, like you said, adolescents or teenagers—with any adult that makes that decision because if they're making it with an uneducated bias, not knowing the facts, then they may think they're doing themselves a big favor when in fact, you know, they may not know all the risks.

**Ballard:** Dr. Roth, this is where I like to kind of shift the conversation because this platform is built off selfcare. Healthcare is selfcare. Now what I want to ask you is what do you do for your selfcare?

**Roth:** Other than trying to keep up what I would call my maintenance up, making sure at my age of 56, I've had a colonoscopy, I've never smoked and chest X-ray, and immunized. That's another big thing, obviously, not just for COVID, for the other ones, too. That's the first thing. Second thing is, you know me well—I'm a big advocate for exercise, I'm not saying I do 2 hours a day. My days don't allow me to do that, but I try to carve out about 40 minutes a day. And for me, my sacred time is in the morning. I'm an early morning riser and from 5am to 5:45am every morning is when I try to get my mind exercise in.

And I think that takes care of a lot of things. It clears my mind. I can't be on the phone, I'm not answering a text. We all know the benefits of that. And then lastly is—I love to cook, I love to eat, but I try to eat pretty healthy at least five or six days a week knowing that we live in the culinary capital of the world here in Biloxi, Ocean Springs, Pascagoula, and New Orleans. I'm probably going to eat one or two dinners that are aren't great for me, but I'll work it off the next morning.

**Ballard:** All right. Well, we often ask, are you a book reader or do you prefer music?

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**Roth:** I love to read. I'm a book reader, too. I can't read the online stuff. I still have to have the book at the bedside. But I love music. My kids laugh at what I listen to and you know, I tell you this story—so my kids are big Harry Styles fans, especially my girls. So they went to see him in concert twice and his new song came out. And when I came home, cooking for the night, Harry Styles was blaring on our home stereo system. But I'm a seventies and eighties guy, you know, like a little Neil Diamond, KC and the Sunshine Band and, you know, just kind of fun, uplifting music.

**Ballard:** All right. I have to ask, since you went there, what would you consider the soundtrack of your life to be?

**Roth:** The soundtrack to my life? It's an interesting question. I don't know. I can tell you what my favorite soundtrack is of all time, but it's not okay or my life. Purple Rain soundtrack when Prince was alive, in his prime. Yes. Movie wasn't very good. But, you know, people forget how talented that guy was.

Yeah. And now speaking of what we're talking about, how a guy like Prince and Michael Jackson, who may have been probably the two best entertainers of my young generation, both died unintentionally of overdoses. And I've seen all footage of Prince when he was playing in Minneapolis. And I'm like, I mean, that guy, he may not have been the best singer and dancer—his guitar skills were flash like, I mean, so, you know, every once in a while, I'll plug in a little "When Doves Cry" by Prince and have flashbacks to college.

**Ballard:** I definitely think Purple Rain is one of the greatest musical bodies of work we've ever seen. And just like that, Dr. Roth, I want to say, your body of work is equally as legendary. We appreciate you here at Singing River, and we thank you for leading us. And more importantly, thank you for taking time to come on the podcast today.

**Roth:** Anytime.

**Ballard:** All right. Now, tell them before you get out of here, Dr. Roth, if someone wanted to get in touch with you, how could they do that?

**Roth:** If you ever want to ask specific questions or have me speak at a civic group or social group, call my office in Pascagoula at 228-809-5510. Bill Moore has been my vice president of IPS our entire career together, and he knows my schedule and I'm happy to get with you to see what we can do to help you out.

**Ballard:** There you go. And we got to get you on to your own podcast Dr. Roth.

**Roth:** Hey, I'm in. Let me know!