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Are More Teens Puffing E-Cigarettes In Aliso Viejo? OC Health

Tobacco products and ads in OC are sold "in kid-friendly locations," -- 3 feet or below on shelves near candy and toys, officials said.

By Ashley Ludwig (Patch Staff) - Updated March 9, 2017 12:30 am ET

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ALISO VIEJO, CA — Is it as easy to buy an electronic cigarette in Orange County as it is to buy a toy?

A report released Wednesday by the Orange County Health Care Agency on the availability and marketing of tobacco and alcohol products, approximately 38 percent of Orange County stores put tobacco products or ads "in kid-friendly locations," which is about three feet or below on shelves near candy and toys, officials said.

The report showed an imbalance in Orange County between healthy and unhealthy options in stores.

Researchers with Healthy Stores For a Healthy Community -- a statewide coalition of public health advocates -- gathered information in the summer of 2016 from about 7,100 stores statewide.

In Orange County, 83 percent of the stores had "little cigars" or cigarillos on the shelves, but only 57 percent offered fresh fruits and vegetables, according to the survey.

The Orange County Health Care Agency noted that 79 percent of stores sold a popular brand of the cigarillos for less than a buck, which is cheaper than a candy bar.

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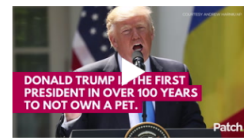
Another notable contrast included 36 percent of stores selling skim or low-fat milk, but about 64 percent selling alcohol.

Sales of e-cigarettes also jumped since the last time the survey was done in 2013 and released in March 2014 -- from 57 percent to 69 percent.

"In Orange County, we have seen an expanded availability of e-cigarettes," said Amy Buch, who oversees the OC Health Care Agency's Health Promotion Division. "There has also been an increase in use of electronic cigarettes by Orange County teens."

There was also an imbalance between ads for healthy products and various vices, the officials said. The survey showed 13 percent of stores advertised healthy products on storefronts, but 69 percent of them promoted

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unhealthy choices, officials said.

The survey also showed 26.7 percent of the county's stores sell tobacco near a school, and 85 percent sell flavors such as grape and gummy candies for non-cigarette tobacco products.

Pixabay Image

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