

# Vaping: What Parents Should Know

Vaping is the inhaling of a vapor created by an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette). It's common among teens.

By learning about vaping, parents can:

- Talk to their kids about its health risks.
- Recognize if their child might be vaping.
- Get help for kids who are vaping.

## How Does Vaping Work?

E-cigarettes (or "vape pens") heat a liquid until it becomes a vapor, which is inhaled. The liquid (called e-liquid or "vape juice") can contain nicotine or marijuana distillate or oil. E-cigarettes can be refillable or pre-filled with cartridges containing the e-liquid. The pre-filled e-cigarettes (called "Puff Bars") are designed for one-time use. After taking a certain number of "puffs," the user throws the device away.

## What Are the Health Risks of Vaping?

The health risks of vaping include:

- **addiction:** E-cigarettes contain nicotine, a drug that's highly addictive. You don't have to vape every day to get addicted.
- **anxiety and depression:** Nicotine makes anxiety and depression worse. It also affects memory, concentration, self-control, and attention, especially in developing brains.
- **becoming a smoker:** Young people who vape are more likely to start smoking regular (tobacco) cigarettes and may be more likely to develop other addictions in the future.
- **impotence:** There is some evidence that vaping can cause sexual dysfunction in men.
- **sleep problems**
- **exposure to cancer-causing chemicals**
- **chronic bronchitis**
- **lung damage** that can be life-threatening

Other health effects are possible that we don't yet know about. Vaping hasn't been around that long, so its health risks aren't all known.

## How Do I Know if My Child Is Vaping?

Start by asking your child in a nonjudgmental, concerned way if they have tried vaping. You want to encourage conversation, not shut it down. Even if you don't think your kids vape, talk about it with them anyway so they know it's unhealthy.

Signs of vaping include:

- new health issues such as coughing or wheezing
- e-cigarette supplies, like cartridges or other suspicious looking items

- new smells (some flavorings are banned, but others are in nicotine and marijuana vapes — so parents might notice fruity or sweet scents)

## What Should I Do if My Child Vapes?

Your child will need your help and support to quit. Help them find the motivation to stop vaping. You might want to talk about:

- wanting to be the best, healthiest version of themselves
- not wanting to be addicted
- avoiding health effects including impotence and decreased sports performance
- not wanting to increase anxiety or depression
- saving money
- going against advertising that targets young people

Some people use vaping to curb their appetite, but there's no proof that vaping helps with weight loss. If you think this is why your child vapes, talk to them about healthier ways to stay at a healthy weight or lose weight.

## How Can Kids and Teens Quit Vaping?

For those who want to quit, it can help to:

- Decide why they want to quit and write it down or put it in their phone. They can look at the reason(s) when they feel the urge to vape.
- Pick a day to stop vaping. They can put it on the calendar and tell supportive friends and family that they're quitting on that day.
- For some people, chewing sugar-free gum or lollipops can help distract them from cravings.
- Get rid of all vaping supplies.
- Download tools (such as apps and texting programs) to their phone that can help with cravings and give encouragement while they're trying to stop vaping. Truth Initiative's This Is Quitting texting program, for example, can help young people quit vaping. Smokefree.gov also offers free apps and other tools that can help someone trying to quit smoking or vaping.
- Understand withdrawal. Nicotine addiction leads to very strong cravings for nicotine, especially in the first few days after stopping. It also can lead to headaches; feeling tired, cranky, angry, or depressed; trouble concentrating or sleeping; hunger; and restlessness. These problems get better over the following days and weeks.

## What Else Should I Know?

Lend your support as your teen tries to quit. Set a good example by taking care of your own health. Make your house smoke-free and vape-free. If you smoke or vape, make the commitment to quit.

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