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# TALK ABOUT VAPING WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOLER

Why it's important  
and how to do it





**A**ccording to the CDC, one in five high schoolers use e-cigarettes. Recently, vaping has been suspected of causing life-threatening acute lung issues. While health officials are still investigating, it's becoming clear that vaping has serious health consequences. Even if you feel shut out by your high schooler's friends these days, you're still the most important influence in their life. Talk to your kids about vaping early and often to help prevent them from starting and stop if they already have. Here's what you need to know to tackle these conversations so your high schooler can confidently face the pressure of vaping.

## WHAT IS VAPING?

**Another name for using e-cigarettes,** vaping delivers nicotine through aerosol or vapor produced by an electronic device that resembles a USB stick. It's often called "juuling" because of a popular brand named JUUL, or simply a "pod". They're used by inserting pods that are pre-filled with a flavored nicotine liquid— fruit, candy, mint, and crème brulee are popular flavors—that are easily found at convenience stores or online.

Pods filled with THC-infused oil can also be used in vaping devices to deliver the same effects as smoking marijuana, but in a more discrete manner.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY HIGH SCHOOLER IS VAPING?

**An increase in secretive behaviors or anxiety and restlessness can be signs of addiction, as can finding evidence of pods or packaging in your child's room, backpack, or car.** The smell of vaping is faint, but you might catch a whiff of flavoring when there's no other source. Unusual charges to your credit card or packages arriving in the mail are also signs of vaping.



## HOW DO I TALK TO MY KIDS ABOUT VAPING?



**SHORT, FREQUENT CHATS** rather than one big conversation. Repeated messages over time can be more effective than one serious lecture.



**FIND OR CREATE OPPORTUNITIES.** If you see someone vaping, that's a great time to bring it up, but don't wait for that to happen. Any quiet time you have your kid's attention will do, especially in the car where no one has to make eye contact.



**USE THEIR LANGUAGE.** Call them vapes or juuls, not e-cigarettes.



**ASK THEM WHAT THEY KNOW *BEFORE* YOU THINK YOU NEED TO.** Start with something as simple as "Ok, there's this vaping thing going on. What do you know about it?"



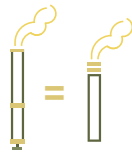
## WHAT DO I TELL MY HIGH SCHOOLER ABOUT VAPING?

Give your kids the facts they're not going to hear from their friends:



**VAPING HARMS YOU.**

- "It's becoming clear that vaping is associated with serious lung and respiratory issues. I'm not saying any of this to scare you. I want you to have the facts because nothing is more important to me than you and your health and safety."
- "Science shows that vapes contain ingredients like nicotine that can harm different parts of your body. It can also affect your memory and concentration. I don't want that for you!"
- "Even the cloud that people exhale from vapes can expose you to chemicals that aren't safe to breathe."
- "Researchers are only now finding out about the consequences of vaping, including its negative effect on lung function." If your teen plays sports or has asthma, this may be particularly compelling.



**THERE IS NICOTINE IN VAPES.**

- "Vaping isn't just water and flavoring. They contain nicotine and chemicals that can harm your lungs."
- "Your brain is still developing. That means you're more vulnerable to addiction. The nicotine in vapes can change your brain and make you want more."
- "Nicotine can train your brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs like meth and cocaine."



**VAPING IS NO BIG DEAL, RIGHT? WRONG.**

- "I know you might think it's not a big deal because of what you see at school or on social media. Just because it's a fun thing for some kids, it doesn't mean it's safe. In fact, it has recently been suspected that vaping can lead to serious lung issues after even just a few weeks of vaping."
- "Most kids don't vape, even if it seems like they do."



**I WISH I HAD NEVER GOTTEN ADDICTED TO NICOTINE.**

- If you use tobacco, you might say: "If I could do it over again, I never would have started smoking," and share why that is.
- If you used to smoke but quit, you could say: "I learned that people who smoke are more likely to get certain diseases and die from them than people who don't. That was really scary, so I quit. But quitting was really hard because of how addictive nicotine is. I don't want you to go through that. The best thing is to not start at all."

## WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND OUT THAT MY KID VAPES?



**STAY CALM AND REMEMBER HOW FRAGILE THEIR HONESTY IS.** Tell them that you appreciate their honesty and focus on the future rather than the past.



**ASK YOUR KID ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH VAPING.** Follow it with, “What keeps you from vaping more often?” This is not to suggest that you approve, but to get a sense of what gets in the way of your child’s vaping so you can reinforce those barriers. Use open ended questions to learn about what they see as the pros and cons of vaping.



**BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS.** Tell them you hope in the future they (or their friends) will stay away from all nicotine products. Suggest that the next time your high schooler goes to the doctor that they ask their provider about the risks of nicotine and vaping.



## WHAT ARE COMMON HIGH SCHOOLER VAPING SITUATIONS AND HOW DO I HANDLE THEM?



**YOUR HIGH SCHOOLER SEES VAPING AS “NO BIG DEAL”**

**What to know:** Use this as an opportunity to reframe what your child knows and understands about vaping. Remember—you’re still the most important influence in your child’s life.

**What to do:** Have reframing conversations early and often. You don’t need to wait until your teen vapes to talk to them about it.

**What to say:** Ask them why they think vaping is no big deal. Explain that many more kids their age choose not to vape than choose to vape and talk about the cases of serious lung issues related to vaping in the news. Talk to them about what nicotine does to their developing brain and the risks (like addiction) associated with it.





#### YOU FIND PODS OR OTHER VAPING MATERIALS AROUND THE HOUSE

**What to do:** Don't panic. Try to understand vaping from the perspective of your teenager—they don't actually see it as harmful. Consider talking to your pediatrician before you sit down with your child to find out why they are vaping.

**What to know:** The goal is to try to get them to quit for their own good, not because you told them to. This is not a one-and-done conversation or process—plan to revisit the topic often and be open to trying several approaches to quitting.

**What to say:** Ask them what they enjoy about vaping or how it makes them feel. Explain how vaping can make them addicted to not only nicotine, but prime them for addiction to other substances as well. Offer to help and support them any way you can, whether that's going with them to see their doctor or exploring therapy to address underlying issues. Tell them that they can text "Start My Quit" to 855-891-9989 to get anonymous help. If your teen is vaping because of anxiety, help them understand that anxiety is a common experience and they shouldn't feel weird talking about it. Help to make them feel comfortable talking about their anxiety.



### YOUR HIGH SCHOOLER'S VAPE HAS BEEN CONFISCATED AND THEY HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL (AGAIN)

**What to do:** Don't panic and try to understand vaping from the perspective of your teen. The goal is to get them to choose to quit for their own good. Consider reaching out to your child's counselor. Vaping could be affecting their performance at school, as could the process of quitting.

**What to know:** Discover what might work best for your child and their individual situation. Consider consulting your pediatrician to equip you to discuss your child's individual health risks. This will be an ongoing series of conversation, not one big talk.

**What to say:** Ask them what they enjoy about vaping or how it makes them feel. Explain how vaping can make them addicted to not only nicotine, but prime them for addiction to other substances as well. Offer to help and support them any way you can. Tell them that they can text "Start My Quit" to 855-891-9989 to get anonymous help.



### YOUR CHILD IS ASKING FOR MONEY AND YOU SUSPECT IT'S FOR VAPING PRODUCTS

**What to know:** Teens often start vaping out of curiosity, the flavors, cloud tricks, or wanting to fit in.

**What to do:** Stay calm. Offer to buy the item they want online, go to the store with them, or offer your credit card instead of cash so that you can monitor the purchase. If your card statement reveals that it was (or could be) a vaping-related purchase, prepare to have a conversation.

**What to say:** Ask them why they vape and how it makes them feel. Explain the dangers of nicotine and addiction to them as well as outline the cost of supporting a habit over time. Offer to help and support them in quitting any way that you can including finding a group of teens who have also quit vaping for support. Tell them that they can text "Start My Quit" to 855-891-9989 to get anonymous help.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT TALKING TO MY KIDS ABOUT VAPING?

There are a variety of resources on vaping. Good ones to explore are:



The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids  
[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)