

# What Parents Need to Know About Teen Vaping and What They Can Do About It

**Vaping refers to using e-cigarettes that heat liquids to produce aerosol that users inhale into their lungs.**

Vaping among teens has recently skyrocketed, and many believe it is a safe activity. About 1 in 5 high school students vape, exposing them to nicotine, a highly addictive substance found in tobacco. Adults may use vaping to quit a nicotine addiction, but youth often start with vaping and graduate to cigarettes later. Vaping is likely to keep young people hooked for years.

## What Are the Risks for Teens Who Vape?

While it might be true that vaping is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes because the vaped aerosols have fewer toxic and cancer-causing chemicals than cigarette smoke, the aerosol from vaping is not harmless. In addition to nicotine, some dangerous chemicals, such as formaldehyde, form when nicotine liquid is heated to high temperatures. Vaping is linked to youth becoming more likely to then try cigarettes, causing more harm. Last year, we learned vaping caused an outbreak of severe lung injuries linked to vitamin E acetate, which is found in vaping devices that deliver tetrahydrocannabinol, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis. More recently, a study found that vaping in teens was linked to infection with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 spreads through repeated hand touching to the mouth and face, which is common when vaping, as is sharing of vaping devices, which can spread COVID-19 if devices are contaminated.

## How Do I Know If My Teen Is Vaping?

Unlike cigarettes, which come in standard shapes and have a distinct smell, e-cigarettes are harder to detect. Some vaping devices look like everyday objects such as USB drives, watches, pens, and markers. Keep an eye out for parts such as refill pods that contain the vape juice, atomizers, batteries, and chargers. Most children prefer sweet-flavored vapes. Catching fruit or candylike smells could be evidence of vaping. Vaping also makes users' mouths dry, causing your teen to drink more than usual. If your child is an athlete and starts having trouble breathing, it also could be due to vaping. Other signs of vaping include nosebleeds, unexplained cough, throat clearing, mouth sores, increased irritability, or mood swings.

## What Can Parents Do to Help Prevent Teens From Vaping?

If you are a parent of a school-aged child, it is likely that your child has been exposed to youth-targeted vaping ads. Your child is also likely to know someone, even a friend, who vapes. Talk to your child early about vaping and the facts about the harmful chemicals that

### Why should I be concerned about vaping as a parent?

- ▶ Most vaping devices contain nicotine, the same addictive chemical in cigarettes.
- ▶ One in 5 high school students vape, so your child is likely to know someone who vapes.

### What do vaping devices look like?

- ▶ Popular vaping devices look like USB drives, markers, watches, or pens.

### How can I tell if my child is vaping?

- ▶ Look for these telltale signs

- |                             |                    |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| • Fruit or candylike smells | • Mouth sores      | • Throat clearing        |
| • Trouble breathing         | • Increased thirst | • Increased irritability |
| • Unexplained cough         | • Nosebleeds       | • Mood swings            |

### How do I talk to my child about vaping?

- ▶ Ask your child to share what they think about vaping.
- ▶ Share facts and resources about the harms of vaping.



people breathe in when they vape. You can share resources that are easy to understand, such as the links listed in the box below. You should also continue to talk to your child about other people who vape at their school and how they feel about it.

## What Can Parents Do If Their Teen Is Addicted to Vaping?

Quitting vaping is just as hard as quitting smoking. If you are concerned that your teen is addicted to vaping, it is important to know that there are several treatment options. Talk to your pediatrician about counseling from an addiction specialist and medications that can help treat nicotine addiction.

### For More Information

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

JAMA Pediatrics:  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2657308>

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