



How to Talk About Vaping

A Discussion Guide for Parents

Let's
#MentionPrevention

When parents talk with kids about substance use, it helps prevent problems before they arise and address any problems that pop up. If you find these conversations difficult to have, you're not alone.

You have to know more than just the facts. You also have to know what to say, when to say it, and how to approach the discussion with the right mindset.

This is especially true if you want to talk about vaping.



Talk Early. Talk Often.



The purpose of this guide is to help you start conversations about the risks of vaping. It offers specific talking points about the contents of vapes, health risks, how to respond to peer pressure, and more. These talking points are useful for elementary school kids all the way through college-age young adults.

Here's the good news – young people are open to having these conversations with you! They want to know that you care about their health and that you don't approve of risky actions. Keep in mind that it's important to have talks even with younger kids.

The latest data shows that almost **5% of middle school students** use e-cigarettes.¹

In college it's as **high as 40%.**²

In other words, it's never too early to start talking with kids about vaping. And it's important to have frequent check-ins with kids and youth of all ages.

This guide is a useful tool to help you start and lead these conversations.

Sources:

1. Wang TW, Neff LJ, Park-Lee E, Ren C, Cullen KA, King BA. E-cigarette Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69:1310–1312. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6937e1>
2. Brown, E.M., Henes, A.L. & Olson, L.T. E-Cigarette Policies on College Campuses: Student Use Behaviors, Awareness, and Policy Support. *J Community Health* **41**, 1110–1115 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-016-0262-y>



Signs That Your Kids May Be Vaping

Like many other substances, it can be tough to know for sure if kids are using vapes. Yet there are many fact-based articles, resources, and guides that help you see the signs.



The resources listed below include pictures of what vapes look like — some of them blend in and look like USB drives or pens. These resources also have action steps that you can take to find help.

It's a good idea to review these tools as you prepare to talk about vaping with kids, teens, or young adults.

- [!\[\]\(7a8011739ec4e250e2f89a547d75fb0a_img.jpg\) American Heart Association](#)
- [!\[\]\(07dce76283bf618e2364d95ae0021e26_img.jpg\) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [!\[\]\(44ee86b940d3a0ca166486da8985875e_img.jpg\) National Cancer Institute](#)
- [!\[\]\(2262b99b3a4953f9b3dfd64b89c00d2e_img.jpg\) Office of the U.S. Surgeon General](#)
- [!\[\]\(72fd141c2b650e3974b4ac376f402874_img.jpg\) Partnership to End Addiction](#)
- [!\[\]\(2477f3a1e0e03bb543b1e7662e8cfcee_img.jpg\) Scholastic](#)
- [!\[\]\(b3585519a49e38e8d8527211b2b955fa_img.jpg\) The Governor's Prevention Partnership](#)
- [!\[\]\(adbcc76182846c2ac4eb313487e4a2bb_img.jpg\) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)



How to Talk with a Positive Mindset



Avoid confrontation and judgement.

It's important to keep the tone of the conversation calm, open, and rational. When you do this, kids are far more likely to listen and be honest with you. Mention the talk ahead of time so they know about it. Make it clear that you care about their health and that's the main reason for the talk.

Steer clear of words that cause stigma or shame.

The words you use impact how kids feel. Avoid any words or language that imply moral failure or bad choices around substance use. If you use this language, it may prevent honest feedback from kids of all ages. Plus, research shows that stigma can be a barrier to a person seeking treatment if they need it.

Focus on the need for guidance.

Just like with other substance use issues, people who use vapes need help or treatment. Research shows that substance use is a chronic disease. And for youth, vaping can pose many long-term health risks. So approach these talks by focusing on facts, respect, and honest dialogue. Help them find the skills they need to make the right choices about vaping.

Power through any rough spots.

Even in the best of talks, kids can still get defensive or flustered. This is especially true around topics like peer pressure, rules, and expectations. Expect objections and maybe an eye roll at times. Yet remember to keep the discussion calm. Give them chances to speak and ask questions.

Here are other helpful resources that may help you prepare to talk with kids, teens, and young adults.

[!\[\]\(47734e4656765d20df4fdbd5b7aff048_img.jpg\) Child Mind Institute](#)

[!\[\]\(bd3b31712ad9bab5a241210fa6925cdd_img.jpg\) KidsHealth from Nemours](#)

[!\[\]\(0fb13ad0bfa3d86868cdd3883e5665b3_img.jpg\) National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)

[!\[\]\(799877f5c2f906134441300079881630_img.jpg\) Psychology Today](#)

[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) Recovery Research Institute](#)

[!\[\]\(7bc43b319a082987e20f7bf78f4bab80_img.jpg\) Today's Parent](#)

[!\[\]\(e50091943b385fe16d3277389202856f_img.jpg\) Verywell Mind](#)

How to Start the Talk



Plan ahead and give notice.

Make sure to mention ahead of time that you plan to have this talk. When you do this, it avoids making it feel like an ambush. This means that kids, teens, and college-age young adults are less likely to feel defensive. It lays the groundwork for a calm and honest discussion.

Look for the right context.

Real-life situations are often the best way to open the door for these kinds of talks. Ask what they think. Here are a few examples that can lead to the right context to start with.

- ✔ Come across a vaping-related ad, video, or news article online
- ✔ Discover vape paraphernalia in someone's room or car
- ✔ Hear about a friend or relative who vapes
- ✔ Pass a vaping- or tobacco-related store
- ✔ See someone use a vape in a store, in a car, or walking outside



Conversation Guide



This section lists open-ended questions to ask during the talk on vaping. It includes a series of suggested responses to each question. They are based on facts and science that we know today. Use these responses in whole or in part to inform the discussion.

Why do you think people choose to vape?

Some adults choose to vape to quit smoking. There is little data that it works for that. In fact, the FDA doesn't approve of vapes or e-cigarettes as tools to quit smoking.¹

Teenagers choose to vape for many reasons. They are curious. They believe it's less harmful than smoking. It's cheaper than smoking or using other substances. The flavors make it seem fun and safe.

According to the CDC, data shows that the main reason teens vape is because a family member or a friend does. Some teens think that it's not harmful if their loved ones do it.

No matter the reason, one thing is for certain – there is nothing safe about vaping.



Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2020-smoking-cessation/fact-sheets/adult-smoking-cessation-e-cigarettes-use/index.html

Conversation Guide

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What do you know about vaping? Do you think vaping is safer than smoking?

It may seem that because a vape just produces a mist, that it must be safer. Yet this is a myth. Vaping isn't safer just because it doesn't produce smoke like a traditional cigarette. The truth is that vaping exposes you and others to many health dangers.

Most vapes contain nicotine salts, which are absorbed much faster than regular nicotine. They are known to disrupt normal brain development in young people.¹ Most kids don't even know that vapes contain nicotine.² It is a highly addictive substance.

If a vape liquid has a label that says it has no nicotine, studies show that many times it's still in there.

Even if the vape doesn't have nicotine in it, you're still exposed to many harmful chemicals. This includes formaldehyde, which is known to cause cancer. They also contain chromium and toxic metal particles like nickel, tin, or lead.

What seems like just "water vapor" is actually an aerosol that may also contain these harmful chemicals.

And it's not just about you – vaping can also harm those around you. Just like secondhand smoke from cigarettes, other people can breathe in the chemicals in vaping aerosol.

There's also something called thirdhand vapor. It's residue that stays on carpets, walls, furniture, and clothing. You may not see it, but this residue can enter the body through the skin. It can even be swallowed by infants and toddlers who put their hands or objects in their mouth.



Sources:

1. U.S. Surgeon General, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/surgeon-general-advisory/index.html
2. Truth Initiative, <https://truthinitiative.org/press/press-release/juul-e-cigarettes-gain-popularity-among-youth-awareness-nicotine-presence>

Conversation Guide

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What do you know about flavors? How can it be bad if it tastes so good?

There are many flavors of e-juice. One online study found more than 15,000 vape flavors.¹ In fact, the presence of so many flavors is a major reason why kids and teens vape. Flavors Hook Kids has data that shows 97% of kids who vape use flavors.²

E-juice can be made from substances that may seem safe to consume, like cinnamon and vanilla. Yet these flavors are often artificial, not real. And studies show that they are toxic and harmful when vaped.

These reasons are why the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) works to reduce youth vaping. The FDA banned flavors from small vaping devices that are mainly used by minors, like Juul.

California passed a law that ends the sale of most flavored tobacco starting in 2021. This includes e-juice for vapes.

Tobacco companies know that kids are likely to use flavors. That is why they created so many. They were made to target kids and teens even though they have nicotine and harmful chemicals in them.

A simple Google search shows you how the tobacco companies targeted vapes to kids. They created enticing flavors. They ran ads in places like Cartoon Network and youth magazines.

In fact, big tobacco companies own the top vaping brands. Juul is partly owned by Altria Group, which owns Marlboro cigarettes and dozens of other tobacco brands. Vuse is owned by British American Tobacco, which owns Newport cigarettes and other brands.



Sources:

1. Journal of Medical Internet Research, <https://www.jmir.org/2020/6/e17496/>
2. Flavors Hook Kids, <https://43xomh2apgzav5gh32k8zb4j-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/fhk-guide-multicultural.pdf>

Conversation Guide

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Do you know all the ways vaping can affect your mind, body, and health?

Scientists are still learning about the long-term effects of vaping. We don't yet know all of the risks. But here are some pretty convincing ones.



Heart

Vaping increases your heart rate and blood pressure.

Vaping can lead to heart disease or even a heart attack.¹



Immune System

Vaping damages immune system cells.

Nicotine and marijuana use are known to weaken your body's ability to fight germs.



Mind

According to the Surgeon General, vaping delivers nicotine to the brain in as little as 10 seconds. Since your brain is still developing, it's more vulnerable to addiction.

Vaping can increase anxiety, mood swings, and irritability.

Vaping makes it harder for you to learn and pay attention.

Vaping is linked to mental health concerns like depression.²



Oral Health

Nicotine is clearly linked to gum disease and tooth loss.

Vaping allows bacteria to more easily stick to teeth and cause decay.³

Vaping devices explode and hurt people way more than you think. If this happens, it can injure your face, jaw, gums, and teeth.⁴

Sources:

1. American College of Cardiology, <https://www.acc.org/about-acc/press-releases/2019/03/07/10/03/ecigarettes-linked-to-heart-attacks-coronary-artery-disease-and-depression>
2. JAMA Network, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2756260>
3. Kim SA, Smith S, Beauchamp C, et al. Cariogenic potential of sweet flavors in electronic-cigarette liquids. PLoS One. 2018;13(9):e0203717. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203717>
4. Rosshem ME, McDonald KK, Soule EK, Gimm GW, Livingston MD, Barnett TE, Jernigan DH, Thombs DL. Am J Emerg Med. 2020 Dec;38(12):2637-2640. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.08.017>

Conversation Guide

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Lungs

Many young people have lung injuries called EVALI that are linked to vaping. They are linked to a synthetic substance called Vitamin E acetate.

Vaping products that contain THC also contain Vitamin E acetate. Any vaping product with THC is dangerous and should never be used by young people.

Vaping causes shortness of breath. This makes it harder to play sports, dance, or do many of the physical activities you love. When you vape it may make you cough and wheeze. If you have asthma, it can make it worse.

Taking care of your lungs is even more important now due to COVID-19. Young people who vape are up to 7 times more likely to get COVID-19 than those who don't.¹

In a recent study, 73% of teens who vape have borrowed a device from a friend or family member.² If you share a device and do not wash your hands, you can raise the risk that you contract COVID-19.



Skin

People who vape often have to deal with acne, dry skin, and rashes.

Nicotine is clearly linked to skin aging and delayed wound healing.

Many people end up in the emergency room with vaping burns. Some require skin grafts.

Sources:

1. Stanford University, <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2020/08/vaping-linked-to-covid-19-risk-in-teens-and-young-adults.html>
2. Pepper, J. K., Coats, E. M., Nonnemaker, J. M., & Loomis, B.R. (2019). How Do Adolescents Get Their E-Cigarettes and Other Electronic Vaping Devices? American Journal of Health Promotion. 33(3), 420-429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890117118790366>

Conversation Guide

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Do you know what to say if a friend asks you to vape? What would you do if a friend offered you a vape?

It may surprise you to know that the number of kids who vape is actually decreasing. According to the CDC, the number of school kids who vape fell by 1.8 million in just one year.¹

If someone offers you a vape, you don't have to take it. Here are some ways you can say no.

- ✔ Say “No thanks”. You may be surprised, yet in many cases that’s all you need to do.
- ✔ Give a reason why. For example, say “I have sports practice tomorrow and don’t want to be short of breath.”

Do you think it will make you look “uncool” if you say no? Do you think your friends won’t like you?

There is nothing healthy or cool about vaping or anything else that can cause you harm. It’s uncool to be sick.

If you’re not convinced, here are some more things about vaping that are uncool:

- ✔ Not being able to breathe
- ✔ Bad breath, yellow teeth, and tooth decay
- ✔ Fear of being judged by adults who matter, like your teacher, coach, or parents
- ✔ Not being able to concentrate on your schoolwork

You may be surprised that even your friends who vape may be looking for a way to stop, but just don’t know how.



Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0909-youth-e-cigarette-use-down.html>



How to End the Talk

Address any concerns or questions.

It's important to close the conversation on a positive note. Remain calm, open, and rational. Avoid judgement on any issues where kids do not agree. Reinforce that vaping can have clear consequences. And offer ways to find more details and set the table for honest talks in the future.



After our talk, are there any reasons that you think vaping still seems like a good idea?

You have to be careful with your health. If vaping harms your mind or body, it can be hard to undo that damage.

Keep in mind that if vaping causes you to perform poorly in sports or on a test, you may not get a second chance.

If it would help, we can sit down and search for more details online. It's good to look at facts instead of relying on what other people say.

Let's agree to do a bit more research if we have any questions. Then we can talk again.



How to End the Talk

(continued)

Have the talk again and again and again.

Keep in mind that this is not a one-time discussion. Kids, teens, and college-age young adults are exposed to new things on a regular basis. It's important to circle back to talk about vaping at regular intervals. Use the same plan, mindset, and context covered at the beginning of this guide.



Did you give any more thought to what we discussed about vaping?

I care about your health. So I want to check in and see if you feel any different about vaping.

Let's review what we talked about before. Just to see if there's anything new we should look into a bit more.



How to End the Talk

(continued)

Find help if needed.

If you find out that your kid, teen, or college-age young adult vapes, remember that they need help most of all. Do not rush to anger or judgement. They may have a substance use disorder that needs treatment. The good news is that there are many fact-based resources that you can turn to for details about quitting.



Can we focus on healthy choices and how to stop vaping?

There are many effective ways to quit vaping that are proven by facts and science.

Just like quitting any substance, there may be some health impacts like nicotine withdrawal. That's why we have to rely on facts and take the proper steps.

Here are some sources to find help that we can look at together.

[!\[\]\(870f5d5e9c0d57485634be3ecf52f3ca_img.jpg\) Harvard Medical School](#)

[!\[\]\(4fe57c3593bf1b21d272ae7ac8dfaf77_img.jpg\) Psychology Today](#)

[!\[\]\(0d5ec72f61334709c3fc9450209b754f_img.jpg\) Truth Initiative](#)

[!\[\]\(b792654f2cef9719eabeb6c5be00811e_img.jpg\) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[!\[\]\(7d1d6890825e83a6a4a51febe2dcc7f3_img.jpg\) Verywell Mind](#)

[!\[\]\(2bae76de5ebbd5c4d7d47162f1673734_img.jpg\) WebMD](#)

How You Can Help



Did you find this guide useful?

Then share it with other parents and help us raise awareness. Turn to your local prevention council for details on resources for parents and youth, vaping test kits, and more.



Durham Middlefield

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This discussion guide is sponsored by Bethany-Orange-Woodbridge Partners for Prevention; Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition; Guilford Developmental Assets for Youth (DAY); Milford Prevention Council; Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS); Step Up Naugy: Naugatuck's Prevention Coalition; Stratford Partnership for Youth and Families; TPAUD, Trumbull's Prevention Partnership; and West Haven Prevention Council.