

Understanding Vaping: What Families Should Know

A family-friendly guide to vaping, nicotine, and healthy decision-making

Vaping is common among adolescents and teens, and many families have questions about what it is, why young people use it, and why adults are concerned.

Whether you're reading this on your own or with your child, understanding the facts can help support open, informed conversations.



What is vaping?

Vaping involves inhaling an aerosol created by an electronic device, often called a vape or e-cigarette.

Many vaping products contain nicotine, while others may contain different substances. They often come in flavors that can make them appealing to young people. Vaping devices are also often small and discreet, making them easy to conceal and difficult for adults to recognize.

Although vaping products are intended for adults, many young people are still exposed to vaping through friends, older peers, social media, and other influences.



Why do young people vape?

There isn't just one reason. Young people may vape because of:

- Curiosity
- Social pressure or wanting to fit in
- Exposure through social media
- Appealing flavors
- Stress or difficult emotions
- A belief that vaping is safer than other substances

Understanding these reasons can help families have more productive conversations.



Why are adults concerned?

Many vaping products contain nicotine. Nicotine can:

- Be highly addictive
- Affect attention, mood, and learning
- Impact healthy brain development

While not every young person who tries vaping develops a serious problem, early nicotine use can increase the risk of nicotine dependence and other health concerns over time.



What kids and teens should know

If you're hearing about vaping from friends, social media, or people at school, you're not alone.

Before trying a vape, it can help to ask yourself:

- Do I know what's actually in it?
- Am I making this choice for myself or because of pressure from others?
- Is this helping me solve a problem—or creating a new one?
- What would I do if it became difficult to stop?
- Who could I talk to if I had questions?

The more you know, the better prepared you'll be to make your own decisions.



Questions families can talk about together

- What have you heard about vaping?
- What messages do you see on social media or from friends?
- Why do you think some young people choose to vape?
- What questions do you have about vaping?
- If a friend offered you a vape, what do you think you would do?
- What do you wish your parent or caregiver knew?

You don't need to have all the answers. The goal is simply to keep talking and learning together.



Myth vs. Fact

Myth: "It's just water vapor."

Fact: Vaping products often contain nicotine and other chemicals. They are not simply water vapor.

Myth: "Everyone is vaping."

Fact: While vaping is common, the large majority of young people choose not to vape.

Myth: "If someone tries vaping once, they're automatically addicted."

Fact: Experimentation and addiction are not the same thing. However, nicotine can make it harder to stop using over time.



Where to go for support

If you have questions or concerns about vaping, consider reaching out to:

- Your family's pediatrician
- School staff or counselor
- A mental health professional
- Other trusted adults in your family's support system

You don't have to navigate these conversations alone.

Looking for more support?

Explore our parent guides:

[Talking with Your Child About Vaping](#)

[When You're Concerned About Vaping](#)

Additional Resources

Learn More About Vaping

[CDC: Resources for Parents and Caregivers](#)

Information about vaping, nicotine, and how to talk with young people about e-cigarettes.

For Teens

[Smokefree Teen \(National Cancer Institute\)](#)

Evidence-based information, tools, and support designed specifically for teens, including resources for quitting vaping.

If Your Child Wants Help Quitting

[Truth Initiative – This Is Quitting](#)

A free text-based program designed to help teens and young adults quit vaping.

For Families and Schools

[FDA's The Real Cost Campaign](#)

Youth-focused information about vaping and nicotine, including prevention and quitting resources.