

How to Talk With Your Children About Tobacco and E-Cigarettes:

A COACHING GUIDE

NYC
Health





Most kids are not smoking cigarettes. That's good news. Instead, more and more kids are using e-cigarettes, also called vapes. E-cigarettes contain nicotine and harmful chemicals and can be just as addictive as cigarettes. More than two million kids are vaping and many more say they would try it.

Many strong forces influence kids to vape, including:

- Peer pressure — Knows someone who vapes
- Media — Aggressive, targeted advertising
- Pop culture — Vaping is widespread across social media and is included in TV shows and movies
- Flavors — Vapes are made to smell and taste like pancakes, bubblegum and thousands of other flavors
- Misinformation — Belief that vaping is safe



You can be an even stronger influence. Powerful messages, at the right time, coming from you will be heard by your kids.

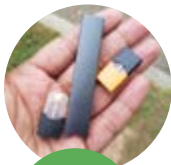
Start talking to your child at about 5 years old, and keep talking with them through their high school years. Your children hear you — even when it doesn't seem like they are listening.

Talk about what you know and what you're learning about e-cigarettes and vaping. Set a positive example by being tobacco-free. Don't yell, shame or punish — that doesn't help them hear you.

Learn the Facts

? What are e-cigarettes and vaping products?

- E-cigarettes, or vapes, heat a liquid (e-liquid) into an aerosol (mist) that is inhaled. While e-cigarettes do not contain tobacco, they almost always contain nicotine and release other harmful chemicals.
- E-cigarettes come in many shapes and sizes. For example, one popular e-cigarette, Juul, is shaped like a USB flash drive.



Other names for e-cigarettes include: vapes, vape pens, e-cigs, e-hookahs or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).



Other words for using e-cigarettes include: vaping and Juuling.

? Are e-cigarettes harmful for kids and teens?

Yes!

- E-cigarettes almost always contain nicotine, which can affect how a young person's brain works. It can make their memory and focus worse, which may make it harder to learn. One pod or refill of e-liquid can have the same amount of nicotine as 20 cigarettes.



Amount of nicotine in a pod of vaping liquid = Amount of nicotine in a pack of cigarettes

- Kids and teens who use e-cigarettes are more likely to try cigarettes. They may also use e-cigarettes to vape cannabis (marijuana) oils.

- The aerosol from heated e-liquids can contain harmful chemicals. Some of these chemicals, like formaldehyde, benzene and diacetyl, are linked to cancer or lung disease. We don't know the long-term effects of being exposed to these chemicals. Other people nearby can also breathe in these chemicals from the air.
- There have been several cases of lung injury linked with vaping different products, including THC (THC is the active ingredient in cannabis) cartridges. People have been put in the hospital and some have even died from this.

? Why are e-cigarettes so popular with kids and teens?

- Flavors, convenience and culture! E-cigarette companies — some of which are owned by tobacco companies — have developed thousands of candy- and fruit-flavored e-liquids that kids and teens like.

- Sweet flavors can make e-cigarettes *seem* harmless, but they are not.
- Vaping devices can be small — making them easy to hide both in school and at home.
- Advertising and pop culture make vaping seem cool. Similar to how tobacco products were advertised, e-cigarettes are glamorized in movies, TV shows and on social media platforms. Teens even upload videos on YouTube to show off their tricks blowing vape aerosol.



Start the Conversation

Find the right moment. Rather than saying “we need to talk,” you might ask your child if any of their friends vape or what they think about something you see together, including:

- Seeing someone use an e-cigarette or cigarette in person or in a video
- Passing an e-cigarette or vape shop
- Coming across some important information online
- Seeing a tobacco advertisement in a bodega, in a magazine or on the internet

You don't have to make this one big talk; many small conversations over time can be more powerful.



Answer Their Questions

? *What's so bad about e-cigarettes?*

- E-cigarettes release chemicals that are addictive and harmful. When people use e-cigarettes, they breathe in tiny particles. Some people have even had lung injuries that sent them to the hospital.
- E-cigarettes almost always contain nicotine and using nicotine can make you crave more of it. Nicotine can also affect your memory and concentration.
- One pod or refill of e-liquid can have the same amount of nicotine as 20 cigarettes.

? *Is nicotine really that bad?*

- Your brain is developing until you're 25, which means it's easier to get hooked on nicotine during this time.

- Using nicotine at your age can make it harder to concentrate and remember things, so paying attention and learning in class might be tougher.
- I want you to have the facts because nothing is more important to me than your health and safety.

? ***I thought e-cigarettes didn't have nicotine —just water and flavoring.***

- A lot of people are confused by this. Almost all e-cigarettes have nicotine and other harmful chemicals.
- When people vape, they're not just breathing in water vapor. It's actually an aerosol with chemicals and microscopic particles.

- Let's look at this story together. (Read the **#DontGetHookedNYC** novella together.)



? ***Aren't e-cigarettes safer than regular cigarettes?***

- E-cigarette aerosol doesn't have as many dangerous chemicals as cigarette smoke, but that doesn't mean the chemicals e-cigarettes release are safe. Using either can harm you.
- It took so long to learn smoking causes cancer and we don't know what the long-term health effects are from vaping yet. E-cigarette companies are basically experimenting on you.

- Some lung injuries have been linked to vaping different products, including THC cartridges. People have been put in the hospital and even died from these injuries.
- E-cigarette batteries have exploded, sending people to the emergency room with fractured jaws and missing teeth.

? ***I (or my friends) have tried e-cigarettes. What's the big deal?***

- Thank you for being honest with me. From now on, I hope you (or your friends) will stay away from e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, like cigarettes. E-cigarettes have ingredients that are addictive and can affect your brain and lungs.
- Vape companies target young people with their ads, but your health isn't important to them. They want you to start early and keep the habit because it means more money for them.

? ***My friends use e-cigarettes that don't have any nicotine in them. It's safe to use those, right?***

- Nicotine is almost always in e-cigarettes or e-liquids, but vape companies make the packaging confusing to try to hide it. The packages and bottles don't always list the ingredients clearly.
- There are other harmful chemicals in e-cigarettes, not just nicotine. If you feel comfortable, talk with your friends about the harmful chemicals e-cigarettes can release.
- Even if you are vaping products that do not contain nicotine, like cannabis or THC oil, there are still some health risks. These ingredients can affect your memory and concentration. People who were vaping only THC cartridges have also had lung injuries.

? *You used to smoke, so why shouldn't I?*

- If I could do it over, I would have never started smoking. I didn't know how hard it was going to be to quit until after I was addicted. Even knowing how smoking could hurt me and our family, it still took many times to quit. I didn't want to get sick, be in pain or even die from it, so I quit.
- Quitting was really hard, but I'm so happy I did. I don't want you to go through that. The best thing is to never start using any of these products.
- Scientists are still learning more about just how bad smoking is. It's not just linked to lung cancer, but to over 10 other types of cancer, heart disease, lung disease and type 2 diabetes. I never would have started if I knew everything I know now. I don't want you to go through the same thing with smoking or vaping.



Keep the Conversation Going

Kids can often act like they're not listening to us. Find ways to naturally share your thoughts with your child. Even texting can be a powerful tool to share information. You can use the following talking or texting points to keep getting the message out there.

Connect and encourage.

- I used to smoke and quitting was really hard, but I am so happy I quit. Smoking and vaping aren't worth it.
- You can be honest with me. If your friends smoke or vape, let me know. No one's in trouble — I just want you to be healthy. Everything they exhale can have nicotine and dangerous chemicals in it, which can affect you.



- If your friends ask you to try vaping, it can be hard to say no, but I know you can do it. Tell them, “No thanks, it’s not something I’m into.”

Remind and repeat.

- The flavors in e-cigarettes might make vaping seem harmless, but vapes are bad for your health no matter what they taste like.

Share resources.

- Did you know this about vaping? Take a look at this [Teens and Vaping handout](#). Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **e-cigarettes**.
- Did you see the Food and Drug Administration’s video about vaping? Search “Vaping is an Epidemic: The Real Cost” on YouTube.
- For help quitting, text “DROPTHEVAPE” to 88709.*

*Service available in English only. Standard text message rates apply.

