

What Can Parents Do to Safeguard Against Vaping?

Be equipped with the facts

Reading through this resource, perhaps more than once, will help you understand the vaping landscape. It's important to be familiar with vape devices (especially JUUL due to its popularity), what's being vaped (i.e. flavorings, nicotine and/or marijuana) and the associated risks.

Have conversations

Look for opportunities to discuss vaping with your child. Opportunities may present themselves in numerous ways: letters from the school about vaping policies, advertisements, seeing someone vaping on TV, walking by someone who creates a huge cloud on the street or passing a vape shop. Be ready to listen rather than give a lecture. Try using open-ended questions to get the conversation going such as, "What do you think about vaping?"

Try to understand why

Most kids start vaping due to curiosity, the flavors, cloud tricks, wanting to fit in, etc. Over time, vaping can become habitual as it is used to address other needs such as relief from boredom and anxiety. Some kids also become addicted to nicotine and continue vaping to avoid withdrawal symptoms. It helps to understand why your child is vaping by asking questions like: "What do you enjoy about vaping?" or "How does vaping make you feel?" Answers to these questions highlight your child's needs that can be addressed in a healthier way.

Convey your expectations

Set clear expectations. Express your understanding of the risks, but also why a person might want to vape. Share why you don't want your child vaping (i.e. concern about toxins, nicotine, marijuana, unknown health risks, injuries due to batteries, gateway to cigarette smoking). If you choose to set consequences, be sure to follow through, while reinforcing healthier choices.

Role play refusal skills

If you have a younger teen, it may help to teach your child refusal skills. After all, if your child is in middle school or older, they are likely to be in social situations where they are offered an opportunity to try a flavor. You might ask, "What would you say if someone offered you their vape?" See how your child would handle the situation. Practicing something along the lines of "No thanks, I'm not interested," said with direct eye contact and assertive body language can help your child be prepared.

Be a good role model

Set a positive example by being vape and tobacco-free. If you do vape, keep your equipment and supplies secured.



What to Say When Your Teen Asks:

Q: *Isn't vaping safer than smoking cigarettes?*

Your child is exposed to less toxic substances when vaping (as compared to smoking), but there are still significant concerns. Their lungs are exposed to fine particles, metals, other toxins and nicotine which can harm them. You may use the example that, "Driving 90 miles an hour with a seat belt on is safer than without one, but neither is safe. The same goes for vaping. It may be a safer alternative than smoking cigarettes, but neither one is without harm."

Q: *They are just flavorings, so what's the big deal?*

Flavorings are common and considered safe when added to food and eaten, but relatively little is known about the long-term effects on your lungs. For example, there is a chemical called diacetyl that is used as a butter flavoring for candy, yogurt and popcorn, among other foods, and has been found in several e-juices. How these additives interact with the stomach is different than how it may affect your lungs. Diacetyl has been linked to "popcorn lung" which results in scarred lung tissue in workers who have inhaled diacetyl in popcorn factories. While there are no known cases of popcorn lung in people who vape, it typically takes years to develop.

Also, e-liquids contain more than just flavorings. Whether it contains nicotine or not, teens also may be taking in fine particles, metals and other toxins. In some cases, teens have vaped e-liquids thinking it didn't contain nicotine, when in fact it did. Deliberate or accidental exposure to e-liquids, whether from drinking, eye or skin contact or injecting it, can be severe, causing seizures or even death.

Q: *Everyone is doing it, so why do you care?*

You can say, "I know you may say this because of what you see in school or even on social media, but the real fact of the matter is that the majority of seniors (and more in lower grades) aren't vaping. While it may be a popular activity for some kids, it doesn't mean that it's safe."

Q: *I don't know what to say when other kids offer their vape to me to try.*

You can say, "Let's figure out what you may be comfortable saying. It's best to be direct and use assertive body language (i.e., direct eye contact with strong posture) and to say something like, 'No thanks, I'm not interested,' or 'You guys can, but I don't want to.'"

Another strategy for younger teens is to use an "X" policy. Whenever your child is in an uncomfortable situation and wants an easy out, they can text an "X." You can respond by texting back to say that something has come up and they must head home immediately, or you will pick them up.

Q: You smoke, so why shouldn't I?

If you've tried to quit, respond by saying "You're right, smoking is unhealthy and I've tried to quit and I wish I had never started. I don't want you to start an unhealthy habit and struggle the way I have to stop."

Q: It's legal, so why worry?

Vaping is not legal for anyone under 18 (and at 21 in some states). Many things are legal, but that doesn't mean they are safe or harmless.

Alcohol is an example of a legal substance, but can result in DUIs, car accidents and major health problems, including liver disease. Similarly, cigarettes are legal, but are highly addictive and proven to cause birth defects and cancer.

Q: I'm just doing it once in a while and nothing bad has happened.

Respond by asking what your child's experience has been with vaping and pose a question like, "What keeps you from vaping more often?" This isn't to suggest you condone or approve of vaping, but rather to get a sense of what the barriers are to your child's use that you may be able to reinforce.

These open-ended questions can help you understand what your child sees as the pros, and potentially the cons, of vaping. Again, being clear about your expectations is helpful, in addition to reinforcing healthy behaviors that compete with vaping.

Resources

Where can I find more information on vaping?

- ▶ Check out the [U.S. Surgeon General's Report](#) on E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults.
- ▶ Help for your child: If your child vapes or smokes, visit teen.smokefree.gov for resources to help them quit including the quitSTART app and a text messaging program (Text "Quit" to 47848).



- ▶ You can also talk to an expert by calling 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669). **Your child may respond to your concerns about vaping if they hear it from another trusted adult or medical professional.**

Connect with a Parent Helpline Specialist

Call 1-855-DRUGFREE

Visit drugfree.org/helpline

Text a question to **55753**

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