

How to Talk to Your Teen About Vaping

Teens may not smoke as many cigarettes as they did several decades ago—but tobacco products have branched out in new ways that lure teenagers into addiction.



One of those ways is to package nicotine products as a liquid flavored with e-juice that can be inhaled through a vaporizer called an e-cigarette, also known as a vape. The vapes are small and discrete and often mimic everyday objects like pens and computer flash drives, making it really easy for a teen to pick up a vape and try it. The product comes in a wide variety of flavors, including those that smell and taste minty or sweet. Popular e-juice flavorings include banana split, cotton candy, Hawaiian Punch, and gummy bears. The pleasing smells make trying vaping products more tempting, especially when it's offered by friends as something fun. Something else to note is that flavored cannabis vape offerings are also becoming more mainstream.

What's next for teen tobacco usage? While regulators argue over what measures to pass to limit teen access, the best prevention today is still having an honest dialogue about the pressures they're facing. Schools may have programs that cover the facts, but parents can personalize discussions with their teens. Consider using these conversation starters with teens of any age.

In 2022, over **2.5 million** middle and high school students reported current e-cigarette use, a higher number than in 2021.
46% of high schoolers who vape are doing it almost daily.

Source: The Truth Initiative

Conversation Starter #1

Find Out About Their Own Experience

Julie's high school athlete son was randomly drug tested one day at school. "The thing is, they don't test for performance-enhancing drugs; they test for recreational drugs—and athletes rarely use those because they know they will affect their performance," he said.

But do those same kids vape? Sure.

Teens may know that smoking traditional cigarettes or doing recreational drugs can affect their health and their lungs; what they might not know is that vaping delivers a similar result. A Truth Initiative survey found that "93% of e-cigarette users reported that vaping negatively affected their lives because it made them feel more stressed, depressed or anxious, while 90% of those who quit said they felt less stressed, anxious, or depressed."

Ask your teen about vaping by relating it to their friends or their activities:

- **Do you know anyone who is vaping?**
- **Do any of the kids on your soccer team vape?**
- **Do any of the kids on the debate team smoke to unwind?**

The pressure to try tobacco can come from teens around them. Asking about their proximity to it can be a good place to start the discussion.



Conversation Starter #2

Naturally Talk About the Trends



A common misperception is that recent government regulations pulled all flavored e-cigarettes off the shelves. That's not true. In June 2022, after a two-year review, the Food and Drug Administration announced a ban on all vaping and e-cigarette products sold by the company Juul, as part of a series of moves by the FDA to target vaping and smoking. But that's only a ban of one company's products. Unless you live in California, sweet and minty flavored tobacco products are still readily available and marketed to teens in flavors sometimes called "chill."

Teens who vape these products describe a taste similar to eating a dessert. Who can resist dessert? According to REACH Labs, 80% of teens who start and use an e-cig are using a flavored product. Check in with your teen:

- **I've heard the vape fruit flavors taste like dessert. Have you heard that?**
- **Some people think vaping nicotine can help with stress. What do you think about that?**

Listen to their experience and insight and share your knowledge, too. Include the fact that no matter how it's flavored, nicotine in liquid form is still addictive. Also, the stress-relieving aspect of vaping has been debunked.

Conversation Starter #3

Share Your Experiences

For teens Mike and Sarah, tobacco has always been around them. Their grandmother smokes, and though she has never smoked in front of her grandchildren, the smell is unavoidable.

While the teens complain about the smell, their mom focuses on the habit that formed decades ago—and how nicotine is still just as addictive. “I talk about how many times grandma has tried to quit and failed, and the effect nicotine has on her breathing, and that, yes, her car always smells. Then I ask them if they think vaping or dipping is any different.”

Personalizing the nicotine experience can help teens understand how the issues they face today can lead to the same harmful consequences of nicotine usage in the past—and that you or someone close to them can help. When talking to your teen, consider:

- **What personal experiences have you had with nicotine that you can share?**
- **What do you wish you had known then that you know now?**
- **How has smoking affected your life?**

By talking about your own experience—the good and the bad—you can help teens avoid traps they don’t want to fall into.



Conversation Starter #4


Look for Natural Opportunities

Margo's son came home from middle school and rushed to the bathroom. "You okay?" Margo asked. "I just don't like going to the bathroom at school because everyone is vaping in there," he told her.

Whether you know it or not, if your teen is in middle or high school they're likely exposed to vaping daily. But what do they know about what they see? It's important to ask.

- **What do your friends think about vapes?**
- **What makes you want to stay away from vapes?**

When your teen starts talking about their personal experience with vaping, it's a great opportunity to discuss their point-of-view and reinforce the healthy decisions they're making.



Truth Initiative and Kaiser Permanente in collaboration with the American Heart Association, offer more facts and insight into vaping, along with resources to help teens quit. Check out [Know the truth](#) for more info.

Conversation Starter #5

If They Use, Offer Help

If your teen already vapes, know that quitting isn't easy. But when they want to quit, here's how you can help. Take a three-pronged approach to nicotine cessation:

1. Skill building

Understand the emotional attraction to vaping. What activity triggers their need to vape? Do they vape while gaming? Out with friends?

2. Social support

Friends, trusted family members. Find the people in your teen's life that they can count on to help them stick to their goals.

3. Pharmacologic therapy

Some users may need the help of nicotine patches or other prescribed treatments to help them quit. If this is your teen, help them seek out the help of a trusted medical professional.

Even if your teen isn't prepared to quit, let them know that you're available to talk about it when they are. Let them know there are other resources available to help them quit, too. Also, know that help is available for parents as well as teens. **Truth Initiative offers a free and anonymous program that teens can enroll in by texting "DITCHVAPE" to 88709.**

