

Talking with your teen about vaping

A TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS¹

BEFORE THE TALK: GET THE FACTS

Vaping is not harmless

- Vaping can increase your exposure to harmful chemicals.
- Vaping can lead to nicotine addiction.
- The long-term consequences of vaping are unknown.
- It's rare, but defective batteries in vaping products have caused fires and explosions.

Risks of nicotine

Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical. Youth are especially susceptible to its negative effects, as it is known to alter their brain development and can affect memory and concentration. It can also lead to addiction and physical dependence. Not all vaping products contain nicotine, but for those that do, the level of nicotine can vary widely. Some mixtures have very low levels, while others can contain more nicotine than in a typical cigarette. Even if a vaping product does not contain nicotine, there is still a risk of being exposed to other harmful chemicals. Vaping nicotine can alter teen brain development.

Vaping versus smoking

For smokers, vaping is less harmful than smoking. However, it is not safe for youth to use any nicotine products, including cigarettes and vaping products. If you suspect your child is addicted to nicotine, talk to your healthcare provider.

Vaping liquids

The ingredients typically found in vaping liquids include glycerol, flavours, propylene glycol and varying levels of nicotine. The long-term safety of inhaling these substances in vaping products is unknown and continues to be assessed.

There is no burning during vaping, instead, the liquid is heated. This process can cause reactions and create new chemicals, such as formaldehyde. Some contaminants, such as metals, might also get into the vaping products and then into the vapour.

Set a positive example

If you use tobacco or vaping products, be honest with your child about the risks, and any regrets, difficulties and health effects resulting from your experience. Talk to your child about when and why you started to smoke/vape and explain how you thought it would make you feel, and how it is affecting your health.

It is never too late to quit smoking. If you are vaping to help you quit smoking, talk to your teen about it. Talk to them about addiction and how hard it can be to quit smoking. And remember, quitting smoking is possible. For free help, visit gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit or call 1-866-366-3667.

¹ Adapted from Health Canada's "Talking with Your Teen about Vaping: A Tip Sheet for Parents"

START THE CONVERSATION

Find the right moment

Take advantage of situations where you can talk about vaping. It doesn't have to be formal. For example, when passing a group of teenagers who are vaping, take the opportunity to have a conversation with your teen about it. Discuss the facts and correct any misconceptions.

Be patient and ready to listen

- Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue.
- Remember, your goal is to have a meaningful conversation, not to give a lecture.

Get support

- Not sure where to begin? Ask your healthcare provider to talk to your teen about the risks of vaping.
- You might also suggest that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches, or counsellors whom you know are aware of the risks of vaping. These supportive adults can help reinforce your message as a parent.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Don't expect to have just one conversation with your child. Odds are you will probably need to talk about the subject many times and in many different places. Whenever you have some time together, you can strike up the conversation again. You will also find that as your child grows, your conversations about vaping will change and reflect their growing maturity, intellectual abilities and the pressures they face. Keep in mind that talking about it can also set the stage for important discussions about tobacco, alcohol, drugs and other risky behaviours.

Stopping Illegal Sales of Tobacco and E-Cigarettes

If you are aware of a retailer who is selling or giving tobacco, tobacco products or e-cigarettes to underage youth, you can notify the Nova Scotia Department of Environment at 1-877-936-8476. That same number can be called if you would like to report a retailer who is advertising e-cigarettes in a manner that is visible to underage youth.

Quick facts about Vaping

- Vaping is not for youth and non-smokers.
- Vaping is not harmless, yet Canadian teens are trying vaping products. Data from a recent Health Canada survey showed that 23% of students in grades 7–12 have tried an electronic cigarette.
- There are characteristics that can make vaping products more difficult for you to recognize or detect: devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some resembling a USB flash drive; liquids can have high levels of nicotine and come in a variety of flavours; and vaping may not leave a lingering identifiable smell.
- Vaping products have many names, such as: e-cigarettes, vape pens, vapes, mods, tanks, and e-hookahs. They may also be known by various brand names.