



Parent Toolkit

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

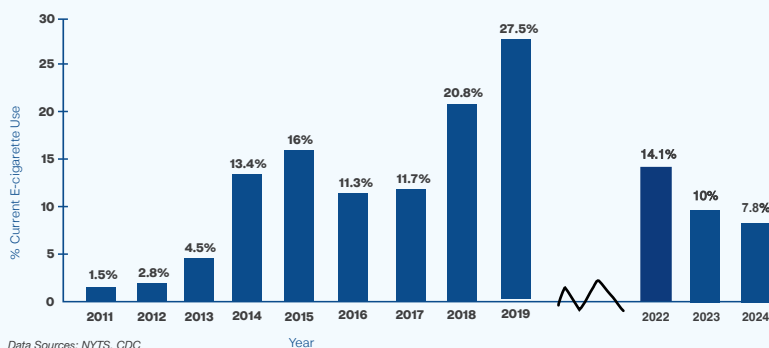
4 Fast Facts on the Vaping Epidemic

Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) are also known as “e-cigarettes,” “e-cigs,” “vapes,” or “vape pens.” They use a nicotine liquid, also called e-liquid, or fluid-filled pods. Many are fruit or candy flavored.

E-cigarettes were developed as a safer alternative to combustible cigarettes, but they have quickly become an on-ramp for nicotine addiction for young people. The CDC has warned that e-cigarettes are not safe for youth, young adults, pregnant women, or non-smoking adults.

Fact 1: In today’s world, every child is at risk of trying e-cigarettes: even yours!

High School Student E-Cigarette Use



- As a parent, you can do everything right and vaping could still happen **to your child**.
- E-cigarette use happens in **all social groups**, even students in sports and on the honor roll.
- E-cigarette sales have **grown 46.6%** since 2020! (CDC)
- Vape shops have been found to sell to minors and claim e-cigarettes are harmless.

Fact 2: Most e-cigarettes have nicotine, which harms brain health.

- Experts (and vaping companies) all agree: **no level** of nicotine is safe for young people.
- Nicotine in e-cigarettes can rewire the adolescent brain for **other addictions** like drugs and alcohol.
- Nicotine can harm your child’s mood, behavior, and judgement which can cause **issues in school**.
- Some disposable e-cigarette brands are known to contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.

Fact 3: Lots of young people think it’s safe... but it’s not.

- Many children don’t know the harms of e-cigarettes. They try it because they are curious about the flavors.
- Children who use e-cigarettes are more than **2-3 times** likely to start smoking cigarettes.
- The tiny particles in e-cigarettes can **harm the users’ lungs**, making it harder to breathe.
- Some unregulated ‘street’ products have caused **permanent lung injuries** and even **death**.
- Scientists are still discovering all the long-term effects of e-cigarettes. Is your child part of the **experiment**?

Fact 4: Vaping can be hard to spot.

- Lots of teens and tweens have secretly vaped in **classrooms, school bathrooms, and even at home**.
- E-cigarettes look like everyday objects, are easy to hide and don’t smell like cigarettes.
- There are accessories—like **clothing, backpacks, and cases**—that are designed to hide e-cigarettes.
- Because vaping is so new, **parents may not know** the signs or symptoms of use to look for.

The Surgeon General: [e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov](https://www.e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov) | The CDC: [cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)

Is your child at risk of trying e-cigarettes?

The short answer is: **Yes**. In 2024, 7.8% of high school students and 3.5% of middle school students, which equals about 1.63 million students, used e-cigarettes.

The topic of vaping is tough for anyone, but especially for young people. E-cigarettes can be a major problem at school, and targeted advertising make it difficult to ignore or refuse. Your child will someday be asked to take a puff.

Luckily, parenting research tells us a handful of parent actions that **will make a difference** in your child's decisions about e-cigarettes and tobacco products. Check below to see how you're already supporting your family.

Circle the answer that most describes your family	A	B	C
1. I've told my child about the harms of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.	Yes	I will	No
2. I've told my child that tobacco and e-cigarette companies pay celebrities and social media 'influencers' to post positive messages about their products.	Yes	I will	No
3. In our home, we have non-smoking rules for children under 21 years old that include e-cigarettes.	Yes	I will	No
4. I always know where my child is during their free time - before and after school, and on weekends.	All the time	Sometimes	No
5. When setting and enforcing home rules, my child would describe me as "tough but fair."	All the time	Sometimes	No
6. My child is involved in frequent extracurricular activities (e.g., art, sports, school clubs, band, etc.).	Yes	Sometimes	No
7. I generally praise my child for good behaviors like not using e-cigarettes.	All the time	Sometimes	No
8. My child cannot attend events or activities without adult supervision.	All the time	Sometimes	No
9. I know the names and phone numbers of my child's friends.	All of them	Some of them	None of them
10. I know the names and phone numbers of the parents of my child's friends.	All of them	Some of them	None of them
11. No adults in our home use tobacco products regularly, including e-cigarettes.	No one smokes	Some smoke	All smoke
12. I would definitely know if my child were using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.	I would know	Maybe	Probably Not

Add up the number you circled in each column.

A parent can do everything right, and your child may still choose to experiment with e-cigarettes. However, we can lower their risk by applying a few 'tried and true' parenting strategies. Your goal is to score more A's than B's and C's.

Checking-In: An Effective Way to Support your Child

Checking-in with your child helps you keep track of their social activity, set rules about their free time, and tune in to when something might be wrong.

These **simple questions** and actions can have a **BIG effect** on their decisions, including whether or not to try e-cigarettes. A few rules about their free time can prevent opportunities for risky behavior. Use the list below to identify easy ways for you to check-in with your child.

Where, Who, When?

Ask where your child is going, who they're going with, and when they will be back.

Make Connections

Know the names and contact information for their friends and parents of friends.

Keep Them Busy

Encourage and help your children enroll in after school activities they enjoy.

Attend School Events

Be sure to keep in touch with teachers, coaches, and staff.

Set Rules

Require adult supervision and curfews. Be consistent in enforcing fair consequences.

Checking-in with your child decreases opportunities to make risky choices about tobacco products and alerts you to possible problems. It's also helpful to know what you're up against. Check out the resources below to learn more about the e-cigarette epidemic and parent tips to support your child.

CATCH My Breath: catch.org/program/vaping-prevention/#parents

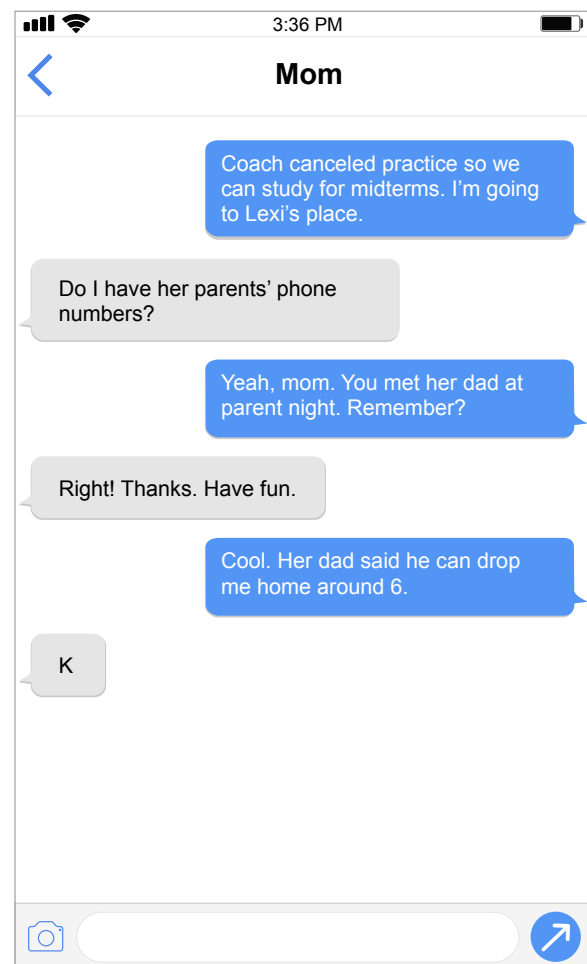
Nemours Children's Health Care and Parenting Tips: KidsHealth.org

The Surgeon General: e-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
CDC.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm



Children who needed to check-in with their parents about their free time were half as likely to try tobacco products.



Spot the Vapes

You see the following school supplies laying out on your child's desk. What you may not realize is that some of these "supplies" are actually e-cigarettes.

Circle the ones that you think are e-cigarettes and check your answers in the box below. **Hint:** There are 6 vaping devices.



Answers: B, C, F, G, I and J are vaping devices. Didn't do so well? Don't worry. A lot of adults struggle with spotting e-cigarettes, especially because there are continually new devices and designs.

Find more information at:

CatchMyBreath.org | TobaccoFreeKids.org | ParentsAgainstVaping.org | E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products Visual Dictionary

Spot the Vaper

Below are 6 signs that they might be vaping.

- A sweet, fruity, or minty **smell** in their room or on their clothes
- Always **thirsty** or have **dry mouth**
- Often **make excuses** to go to the bathroom or outside during family time
- Frequent **cough** and/or **nose bleeds**
- Change in mood like being more **irritable** or **anxious**
- Change in **eating habits**

If you think your child could be vaping, talk to your child's physician and/or go to teen.smokefree.gov.

Common Roadblocks to Having the Talk about Tobacco & Vaping

"I feel like a hypocrite."	"They already know not to smoke or vape."
• Be clear that, even though you use tobacco, it's not ok for someone their age and why. • It's never too late to quit. It usually takes many attempts to quit for good. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) to make an attempt. • If you don't intend to quit, it's even more important to have that conversation.	• That's great! Your child probably knows that smoking and vaping are dangerous, but research shows they need to hear clear expectations from you. • New information is coming out every single day. You can keep looking for new facts to share with your child by searching, "CDC: Know the Facts" on the internet.
"I don't know how to start the conversation."	"My kids won't listen to me."
• Before talking with your child, you want to learn all you can. Check out links on the bottom of these pages to get more information. • Practice what you might say and how you would respond to questions. • Use a natural opportunity to bring up tobacco and vaping like seeing an e-cigarette advertisement or someone smoking.	• Not true! While they may be hearing new opinions from peers and social media, what you say will always matter. • Despite how it feels, research shows us that parents actually have the biggest influence when it comes to tobacco and e-cigarette use.
"My child is too young to be talking about tobacco or vaping."	"It'll be uncomfortable."
• Vaping and smoking are everywhere—on social media, TV, movies, and at school— even elementary school! • Children of any age need to know the truth about tobacco products and vaping. • Younger children don't need all the details, but they do need to know that tobacco products are dangerous, and you disapprove of children using them. Keep the conversation short and direct.	• You're not alone! Most parents feel uncomfortable talking about substance abuse and addiction with their children. • It's true that some children resist 'serious' talks but they're still listening despite the eye-rolling. • If a few minutes could save your child from forming an addiction or getting in trouble at school, isn't it worth it?

For adults: If you are ready to quit tobacco, call the Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for help.

For children: To help your child quit vaping, have them text DITCH VAPE to 88709.

The Surgeon General: e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm

How to Talk to your Child about Smoking & Vaping

If you feel overwhelmed about what exactly to say to your child about tobacco products, you're not alone. To make it easier, we've provided suggestions below using what has worked for other parents.

What you expect	Be clear about what you expect. While it's helpful to start the conversation with questions and hear your child's thoughts and experiences, be direct with them. Here are some example statements. Pick what suits your family best: • "We don't want you to use tobacco or e-cigarettes." • "We disapprove of teens vaping." • "I'm proud of you for not using e-cigarettes." • "In our family, nobody under age 21 can smoke or vape."
Why it's important	It's easy to say, "Don't do it because it's bad for you," but that's not as effective as explaining the reasons why it's bad for them. Also, remember young people don't think much about long-term health consequences, like cancer or heart attacks. Instead, focus on the immediate social consequences, such as getting in trouble or losing control due to nicotine addiction. • "The nicotine in tobacco and e-cigarettes is addictive. Once you start it's very hard to stop." • "What do you think would happen if you got caught vaping at school? You can get in big trouble like getting kicked off the team/out of the club." • "Nicotine is bad for your brain. It makes it hard to think clearly around friends and in school."
How to respond	Your child may have been invited to smoke or vape and didn't know what to do. Ask open-ended questions and make it clear that you are listening to them. Teach them how to respond with some refusal skills and exit strategies. • "If anyone is pushing you to do anything you don't want to, just call. I'll pick you up, no questions asked. Better safe than sorry." • "If someone offers you an e-cigarette, say something like this: ⊗ 'No way! Coach/my mom would be really mad if I got caught vaping.' ⊗ 'I'm not getting in trouble just for that.' ⊗ 'I can't afford to get addicted to that junk.'
If they do it	It's natural to feel upset if you find out that your child has experimented with tobacco. You may need to take a few minutes to yourself before talking with your child. Remember to convey that you love them but disapprove of the behavior. Remind them about the family rules about smoking and be clear about the consequences. A small consequence will get the message across whereas severe consequences may have the opposite effect. Here are some consequences that parents have used: • Loss of phone privileges for 1 week • Loss of 1 month of allowance • Limitations on social activities for 2 weeks • Writing a report to the parent about the dangers of e-cigarettes If your child is caught vaping multiple times, it may be time to treat the addiction. To help your child quit vaping, have them go to truthinitiative.org/thisisquitting or text DITCH VAPE to 88709.

Be Ready for Tough Questions about Vaping

While most parents expect their child not to smoke or vape, studies show that you need to make that expectation clear. Despite what your child says or does, you still have a lot of influence on their decisions. Lots of parents have found it helpful to practice their responses to tough questions. We've put together a worksheet to help you answer some possible tough questions your child might ask you.

Why don't you want me to use e-cigarettes (or tobacco)?

Here are some suggestions on how to respond:

- Science shows that there are addictive and dangerous chemicals in e-cigarettes and tobacco products.
- Because you are still growing, nicotine is especially addictive and can harm your brain permanently.
- The tiny particles that are inhaled when someone uses e-cigarettes can harm their lungs making it harder for them to breath, make asthma worse, give them a bad cough, nose bleeds, and more.

Make it your own:

E-cigarettes just have nicotine and none of the “bad stuff” like cigarettes. Who cares?

- Nicotine is still a problem. It makes it hard to think clearly around friends and in school.
- Since your brain is still growing, nicotine is especially harmful for you.
- Using e-cigarettes makes it 2-3 times more likely you'll get addicted to regular cigarettes later. It can even change your brain, so you are more likely you'll get addicted to other substances like alcohol or drugs.
- We don't know the all the long-term effects for all the chemicals inside e-cigarettes.

Make it your own:

At least I wouldn't be smoking cigarettes or doing something worse. It's just a vape.

- I'm proud that you're making good decisions. E-cigarettes can still harm your body and brain even if they don't have the same toxins.
- Whether you get nicotine from an e-cigarette or other tobacco products, it is still risky for your brain.
- E-cigarettes haven't been around long enough for us to know all the possible harms they cause.
- Just because e-cigarettes are shown to be safer, that doesn't mean they're healthy or even safe.

Make it your own:

Everybody is doing it. It's not a big deal.

- Thank you for being honest with me. Science shows that there are a lot of bad things that come from using e-cigarettes like lung injury, addiction, brain changes, and more. That's a big deal.
- Using e-cigarettes is illegal for someone your age. Every time a person under 21 chooses to use e-cigarettes, they are risking their future.

Make it your own:

You smoke cigarettes/use e-cigarettes. Why shouldn't I?

- Just because I smoke/vape, doesn't mean you should. Once you are addicted, it's really hard to quit.
- It's legal for me to smoke/vape but not for you. There are laws to protect you because nicotine permanently damages growing brains.
- If I had a chance to go back and change time, I would not have started smoking or using e-cigarettes. Nicotine is very addictive, making it really hard to stop.
- I plan to try to quit again sometime. It takes most people many tries to quit for good. I don't want you to have to go through what I have gone through. If you don't start, you'll never have to stop.

Make it your own:

Find more information at:

CATCH My Breath: [Catch.org/pages/CMB-Parent-Resources](https://catch.org/pages/CMB-Parent-Resources)

The Surgeon General: [e-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](https://www.e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [CDC.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids: [TobaccoFreeKids.org](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org)

Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes: [ParentsAgainstVaping.org](https://www.ParentsAgainstVaping.org)

Nemours Children's Health Care and Parenting Tips: [KidsHealth.org](https://www.KidsHealth.org)

Parents Tackle the Vaping Epidemic

"Honestly, I didn't think my son needed me to tell him that he wasn't supposed to do things like e-cigarettes. When I found out his best friend was caught at school with one of those things, I realized I had to talk to my son. When I talked to him about it, he said it was something I didn't need to worry about but I'm still glad I was direct with him. I told him I was proud he was making good decisions."

- Teen vaping is an epidemic. **All kids** are at risk.
- Despite how it seems, talking to your kids directly about e-cigarettes can have a **big effect**.
- **Directly say** you don't want them to use e-cigarettes and **explain why** with reasons that matter to them.

- There are many **known and unknown health consequences** associated with e-cigarettes and vaping.
- Vaping in any form is **illegal** under the age of 21 years old. Underage people caught vaping, could face legal/school disciplinary issues.

"As a parent, it feels like there's always some big, new, horrible thing that kids are dealing with—it gets overwhelming. When I first heard of these vapes, they seemed pretty harmless and I thought it would be better than the other stuff she could get into. After seeing a couple of news stories, I realized how wrong I was. Vaping is a big deal and I don't want my kid to do it."

"I found an e-cigarette in my son's room so I made him write a presentation about the dangers of vaping and present it to the family. Quickly googling "CDC & Vaping," he realized he had all the facts wrong. He said he feels like he dodged a bullet by stopping the habit before he got addicted. I'm proud to hear that he's even been a bit of an advocate now, encouraging his friends to stop and his siblings not to start."

- If you find out that your child is experimenting with e-cigarettes, use a **small consequence** to get the message across. Severe consequences may have the opposite effect.
- If you think your child is addicted to nicotine, **treat the addiction not the behavior**. Be patient as it can take multiple times for them to successfully quit.

Parents Tackle the Vaping Epidemic

"At first, she was annoyed because I made her text me about where she was after school every day. But now, it's just something that we do. Every time she forgets, she loses phone privileges for the evening at home. Trust me, she tries really hard not to forget."

Family Rules

1. Call to tell me where you are after school or if plans change.
2. I must have the name and phone number of your friends and their parents.
3. There must be an adult at all social activities.
4. No one in the family is allowed to use tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

"Regardless of what other families are doing, our family is going to have rules. We involve the kids in making those rules because they're about representing our family and what we stand for."

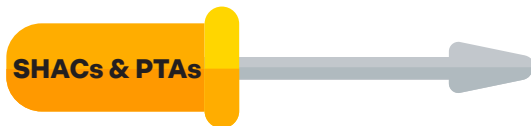


Tools for Tobacco Change

No matter how much you're doing at home, your child's school, friends, and local community *outside your family* also influences their decisions. Just one voice can start the ball rolling to a tobacco free community. Why not yours? Check out these tools and try one today!



Not afraid of public speaking? Go to www.catch.org/program/vaping-prevention/#parents to get slides that you can present at your school, community center, or religious organization.



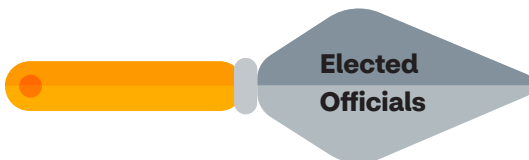
Be *that* parent. Contact your district's **SHAC (School Health Advisory Council)** or school **PTA (Parent-Teacher Association)** to team up with others to talk about your school's anti-vaping plan.



Go undercover and report retailers in your community that illegally sell e-cigarettes or tobacco to people under 21 years old. Submit a violation using the **PAVe (Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes)** reporting tool at www.parentsagainstvaping.org/fda-reporting.



Surf the net and visit www.tobaccofreekids.org/advocacy-tools to find out what other states and communities are doing to create a tobacco and vape free community.



Talk to Power. Visit usa.gov/elected-officials to look up the people that represent you. Write a letter or make a call and let them know what you want to be done about the vaping epidemic



To get the most accurate and current information, search the web for any of the following with "and vaping."

CDC	Surgeon General	American Heart Association	Public Health Law
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If your child wants to get involved, in tobacco prevention, direct them to the following sites:

truthinitiative.org
therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov
 In Texas: txsaywhat.com
 In Florida: swatflorida.com