

**A VAPING CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS  
FROM THE CANADIAN LUNG ASSOCIATION**

# How to talk to your child *about vaping*

Learning more about vaping and its consequences can help you have an honest and informed conversation with your child about vaping, and help your child make informed and healthy decisions.

## **Tips for talking with your child**

Use these tips and suggestions for before, during and after you talk with your child. They provide a good a framework for having a productive conversation about vaping.

### **Know the facts**

Misinformation about vaping is everywhere. Many children don't know just how harmful vaping can be. Knowing the facts about vaping and its consequences can help you have an informed and productive discussion with your child.

### **Is it worth it? The costs and consequences of vaping**

Vaping can have serious consequences on the lungs, the heart, the brain and more. It can also have significant financial, environmental and social consequences.

The Canadian Lung Association advocates for strong measures to prevent a new generation from nicotine addiction. We regularly meet with federal and provincial government members and policymakers to push for action, including making nicotine products inaccessible to children and a ban on all flavoured vaping products.

For more on how we promote lung health and prevent lung disease, visit [lung.ca](http://lung.ca).



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## A VAPING CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

# Before you talk

### 1. Know the facts

Misinformation about vaping is everywhere. Two thirds of teens don't even realize that e-cigarettes contain addictive nicotine.

Before the conversation, get comfortable with the key dangers and potential motivations for kids to vape. You may not feel like an expert, and that's okay. Expressing care and concern is one of the best ways to support your child.

### 2. Put yourself in your child's shoes

Consider your kid's viewpoint. Imagine the obstacles, pressures and social environment before you address your concerns.

Remember what it was like when you were a kid. Make sure to relate to them. Remind them that you're on their side. When empathy is expressed and good communication exists, kids take fewer risks.



### 3. Find the right time and place

Pick a calm moment that is distraction free. Asking your child about vaping when it is already top of the mind gives you a non-confrontational way to learn about your child's awareness, interest and involvement without defensiveness.

Wait for the right opportunity to increase the chance that you are heard. Maybe you're passing a vape shop, watching TV together or talking before your child is on their way out with friends.

### 4. Take an open and calm approach

As you talk to your child, avoid judgment or frustration. Kids may pick up on your tone and tune out or react defensively.

An open conversation will disarm the notion that this is a lecture. It will also provide a relaxed environment to discuss ideas without making them feel like they are being blamed or in trouble.

### 5. Take time to practice

For important and potentially difficult conversations like these, it's helpful to know exactly what you'd like to say before you say it. Take time, in front of the mirror or with a partner, to run through the points that you feel are most important.

Consider how your child will react to the information. Try to anticipate how the conversation may go and come prepared to respond calmly to any situation.

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# During your talk

### 1. Acknowledge your child's independence

Your children make good decisions every day. Abstaining from vaping could be one of them. Thank them for their responsibility and appeal to their good judgment.

### 2. Ask for their perspective

Hear their side of the story first. It's good to know what they find appealing or unappealing about it. If they're interested in trying it, ask why.

Ask them open-ended questions rather than yes or no questions. This will help them open up, be engaged and be less defensive.

### 3. Be ready to hear that your child may have vaped

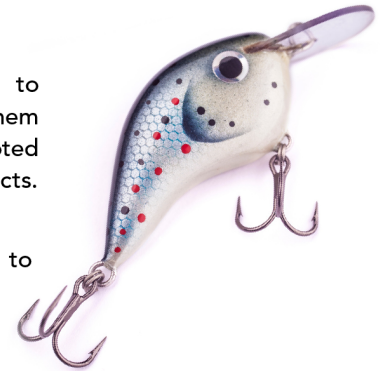
A much higher percentage of kids have tried vaping than most parents recognize. There is a distinct possibility that your child has experimented with vaping.

Make sure to start by thanking them for being honest. This is key for continuing an open conversation and relationship of trust. Explain that your motivation is protecting and caring for them.

### 4. Blame Big Tobacco, not your kid

Your child is the target of Big Tobacco advertising, devised to intentionally hook a young audience on nicotine, and make them customers for life. The same companies who funded and promoted cancer-causing cigarettes are the same ones behind many vape products.

Remind your kid that you are both on the same side when it comes to Big Tobacco.



### 5. Avoid scare tactics

It's good to share your concerns, but don't make the mistake of losing your child's attention with dramatic claims.

Equating vaping with other temptations or illegal drugs actually reduces your credibility and chances of connecting with them.

### 6. Connect with what they care about

Make their concern personal. Explain how vaping can prevent them from achieving their future goals.

Point out how proven physical damage to lungs and brain will affect any athletic aspirations. Illustrate how vaping takes an invisible toll on mood, memory and attention span, impacting academic or career goals.

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# After you talk

### 1. Say thank you

Let your child know that you appreciate them for listening, for their honesty and for continuing to make the right decisions.

Ending the conversation on a note of trust will make it easier for them to talk to you when they have questions or need advice.

### 2. Help your child manage stress

Unfortunately, stress is universal and can be experienced at a young age. Talk to your kid about any larger concerns or pressures they may be feeling. Make sure they have healthy outlets for relief.

### 3. Help your child manage peer pressure

One of the largest motivating factors of youth vaping is influence from friends or classmates.

Consider rehearsing or role playing to give your kid the social tools to refuse tobacco products. Offer some quick facts or an anecdote that they may feel comfortable sharing.

### 4. Stay up to date

Vaping is an ever-evolving issue. Keeping your child protected means staying informed.

### 5. Follow up

This isn't a one-time conversation. Even if everything goes well, over time there will be new curiosities, product developments and research findings.

Make sure to leave lines of communication open. Fact sharing is a great way to reintroduce the conversation topic.

### 6. Share this information

There are other parents struggling with these same issues and how to address them. Share this information with them on social or in a quick email.



## A VAPING CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

# Know the facts

## Frequently asked questions about vaping

### What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the “vapour” produced when a liquid solution (vape juice or e-juice) is heated to the point it becomes an aerosol. The aerosol is inhaled through the mouth and into the lungs.

### What is a “vape”?

A vape (sometimes called an e-cigarette) is the device that is used to heat up and inhale the aerosol. There are both disposable vaping devices and reusable vaping devices.

Reusable vapes can be recharged and the liquid can be refilled. A “starter kit” for a reusable vape includes the device, the charging cable and sometimes a “pod” of vaping liquid.

A disposable vaping device come prefilled with e-liquid and a fully charged battery. Once the battery or e-juice runs out, the entire unit is thrown away.

### Why should I talk to my child about vaping?

While smoking rates among Canadian youth are at an all-time low, youth vaping is on the rise.

Although most youth are aware of the harms and consequences of smoking cigarettes, they often underestimate the affect that vaping can have on their health and wellbeing.

Learning more about vaping and its consequences can help you have an honest and informed conversation with your child about vaping, and help your child make informed and healthy decisions.

### Parts of a vaping device

#### Cartridge or tank

Holds the vape juice, can be refillable on reusable vape devices

#### Coil or atomizer

A metal heating element that helps to turn vape juice into an aerosol

#### Indicator light

Lights up or flashes to indicate things like low power, an empty tank or overheating

#### Battery

A rechargeable lithium ion battery that can heat to over 400F in seconds

#### Charging port

Present on reusable and some disposable vaping devices

Both reusable or disposable vaping devices come in different forms and colours but are generally include the same components.



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## What's in "vape juice"?

### Vegetable glycerin and propylene glycol

When heated, these substances turn into the gas that makes up the aerosol that's inhaled. They are both common food additives and are described on vaping sites as "food safe". "Food safe" only applies when they're added to food and ingested, not heated to high temperatures and inhaled into the lungs.

### Nicotine

Not all vape juice contains nicotine, but most does. Nicotine is highly addictive stimulant that causes temporary feelings of relaxation and wellbeing. Use of nicotine can harm the developing brain and makes it more likely that your child will begin smoking cigarettes.

### Flavour

There are thousands of different flavours of vaping liquid available, including many fruit and candy flavours that are a major draw for youth.

### Other chemicals

In addition to what's listed on the label, this aerosol contains other chemicals that are produced by heating the liquid in the vaping device — including some that are known to break down to form cancer-causing compounds, such as aldehydes and diacetyl, when heated.

## Why do kids vape?

While smoking rates among Canadian youth are at an all-time low, youth vaping is on the rise. Although most youth are aware of the harms and consequences of smoking cigarettes, they often underestimate the affect that vaping can have on their health and wellbeing.

Youth report that they vape to reduce stress and because of their desire to fit in. Youth say they enjoy vaping. Vapes come in thousands of different flavours, many of them candy and fruit flavours that are popular with young people. They also vape because they become addicted to nicotine.

## How can I tell if my child is vaping?

Vaping is easy to hide, and the signs can be easy to miss. Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes don't leave the telltale scent of tobacco.

New asthma-like symptoms (coughing, shortness of breath), increased irritability and increased thirst are all signs your child could be vaping.

Other signs that your child could be vaping include:

- Presence of unfamiliar technology, online purchases or packaging
- Faint sweet or fruity scents
- Behavioral and mood changes
- Increased restlessness
- Cutting back on caffeine
- Desire for flavor due to tastebud degradation
- Pneumonia
- Nosebleeds

**The youth vaping rate in Canada is approximately twice the youth smoking rate.**

STUDENTS IN GRADES 7 TO 9

**18.3%**

have tried vaping

**9.1%**

have tried smoking cigarettes

STUDENTS IN GRADES 10 TO 12

**40.8%**

have tried vaping

**21.6%**

have tried smoking cigarettes

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# Clearing the air

## 3 common vaping myths explained

### **“What’s the big deal? It’s just water vapour and flavour!”**

#### **There’s no actual “vapour” in vaping.**

Just like with cigarettes, clever marketing and buzzwords can give the impression that vaping is not that big of a deal.

The words “vaping” and “vapor” suggest that what’s being inhaled when vaping is harmless water vapor. What vaping devices actually produce is an aerosol — a mixture of tiny liquid particles suspended in a gas.

When you vape, you’re heating known and unknown chemicals to high temperatures to create an aerosol and inhaling that aerosol directly into the lungs.

### **“Trying it once can’t hurt me.”**

#### **It’s possible to get hooked after vaping only a few times.**

Youth may be curious to try vaping because they don’t understand how harmful and addictive it can be. But nicotine, a stimulant derived from tobacco, is one of the most addictive drugs available. It is possible to become addicted to vaping (nicotine) after just one or two uses.

### **“At least I’m not smoking. Vaping is way healthier.”**

#### **Vaping is harmful — especially to children and teens.**

Vaping has been marketed as smoking cessation tool that’s less harmful than cigarettes. The truth is, vaping is harmful, especially to children and teens whose brains and lungs are still developing.

Vaping has also been shown to be a “gateway” to smoking: 2 out of 3 12-to-17-year-olds in Canada who vape and smoke began with vaping.



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# *Is it worth it?*

## The costs and consequences of vaping

Although most youth are aware of the harms and consequences of smoking cigarettes, they often underestimate the affect that vaping can have on their health and wellbeing. Vaping harms the brain, the lungs and airways, the heart and blood vessels and the teeth and skin.

### The lungs & respiratory system

- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Breathlessness
- Increased vulnerability to respiratory infections
- Scarring of the lungs
- Narrowing of the airways
- Asthma or worsening asthma symptoms

### The brain & nervous system

Because their brains are still developing, nicotine can cause long-term problems with:

- cognition
- memory
- executive function
- impulsivity

### The heart & circulatory system

- Faster heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Damage to blood vessels
- Increased risk of vascular disease
- Heavy metal build up in blood and organs

### Teeth & skin

- Dry mouth
- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Dry skin





## A VAPING CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

# *Is it worth it?*

Vaping can affect more than just your child's health. It can keep them from doing what they love and prevent them from reaching their goals.

### **There's nothing pretty about vaping**

Vaping can affect the skin, causing redness, inflammation, dry skin and pre-mature aging.

Vaping has also been linked to dry mouth, bad breathe, tooth decay and a buildup of dead skin cells on the tongue called "black, hairy tongue".

### **Vaping could put your child's extracurricular activities at risk**

Many school and community sports teams and other clubs have a code of conduct for participants. Being caught vaping may be a violation, and it could lead to your child being suspended or removed from the team or activity.

If your child is on a team or in a club that has a participant code of conduct, review the code with your child. Consider speaking to a leader, coach or team manager if it's unclear if vaping violates the code.



### **Vaping could cost your child big bucks**

Vaping and the sale of vaping products are subject to many of the same restrictions as tobacco products. In most provinces and territories, vaping is banned on school grounds, on restaurant patios, in indoor public spaces and in private vehicles when minors are present. In some provinces, such as Ontario, vaping is banned in playgrounds, outdoor recreational facilities and at beaches.

Being caught vaping where it isn't allowed could mean fines of hundreds of dollars.

### **Vaping waste is terrible for the environment**

If your child is passionate about the environment, they should be aware that vaping has serious environmental consequences.

Throwing away a vaping device means throwing away hazardous waste, electronic waste and single-use plastic waste all at the same time.

#### **Hazardous waste**

Nicotine salts and heavy metals, like nickel, cadmium, lead and mercury can leech into water and soil.

#### **Electronic waste**

Lithium in the batteries is a finite resource that could be used to create batteries for electric cars or e-bikes. It's also flammable, and discarded vapes have caused fires in garbage bins and at waste facilities.

#### **Single-use plastic waste**

The plastic components of vaping devices eventually break down into microplastics, which can accumulate in and damage cells of living organisms.

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# A new kid on the block

## 5 things you should know about nicotine pouches

Nicotine pouches are the latest product from Big Tobacco that can lead to nicotine addiction in children and teens.

**1.** Nicotine pouches are the latest evolution of smokeless tobacco products. Sold under the brand name Zonic and made by Imperial Tobacco, nicotine pouches were approved for sale in Canada in July 2023.

**2.** Nicotine pouches are used similarly to chewing tobacco and snus, however they contain no tobacco. Each small teabag-like pouch contains powdered nicotine and flavouring. A pouch is placed between the cheek and gum for a gradual release of nicotine.

**3.** Each pouch contains 3 to 4 mg of nicotine. That's as much as 3 to 4 cigarettes.

**4.** Initially nicotine pouches were classified by Health Canada as a natural health product for nicotine replacement therapy (smoking cessation). As such, there was no legal minimum age to purchase this product and they were readily available at many corner stores. The Canadian Lung Association was part of a successful national campaign to change these rules, as of August 28, 2024.

**5.** Nicotine pouches are popular with athletes (especially in hockey and football) as they are seen as a stimulant that doesn't affect lung capacity.

