



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness



Tips to Support Youth to Quit or Reduce Vaping

A guide for parents and communities



What do I need to know?

Speaking with youth about vaping can be intimidating at first. This guide will give you the information you need to feel confident about speaking with youth in your family or community about vaping.

It is important to approach each conversation with an open mind and a gentle approach. Be ready to answer questions, especially if you or another adult in the youth's life uses commercial tobacco products or other substances.

What is in vape pens?

A vape pen, also known as an e-cigarette, typically consists of a mouthpiece, a tank or cartridge that holds the e-juice, an atomizer that heats the e-juice to create vapour and a battery that heats the atomizer. E-juice contains nicotine, a liquid to dissolve the nicotine like propylene glycol (sometimes called a solvent), vegetable glycerin or glycerol and other chemicals used to flavour the product.



Youth and nicotine

Youth are more sensitive to the harmful effects of nicotine because their brains have not yet finished developing. Nicotine and other harmful chemicals may alter brain development, negatively affect mood and memory and worsen anxiety. Youth can also develop a dependence on nicotine with much lower levels of nicotine than adults¹.

Is vaping safer than cigarettes?

Although marketed as a safer alternative to conventional cigarettes, the long-term health effects of vaping are unknown.

Right now, research indicates that vaping may be less harmful than smoking, but it's still not safe. It may be beneficial for cigarette smokers to switch to vaping, but it is not healthy for people who don't smoke to start vaping.

Research is also looking at the health effects of various vape flavourings. Some studies have shown that ingredients in vape flavouring can cause inflammation, harm the lining of your lungs and cause DNA damage in lung cells². Some flavouring, like menthol and cinnamon, have been shown to be toxic to the cells of the body³, but their effect on health is yet to be determined.

Vaping and nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy is a medically approved way to help people quit smoking by taking nicotine through means other than smoking or vaping. E-cigarettes or vape pens are not currently recommended as a nicotine replacement therapy product.

Those who smoke are encouraged to talk with their doctor or a pharmacist about trying recommended nicotine replacement therapy products. The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) [covers the cost of these products](#) for First Nations in BC.





Vaping habits and nicotine

Due to the different nicotine levels in e-juice cartridges, vaping can deliver more nicotine than the average cigarette. And because it's easier to vape discretely, youth may use their vape pen more than they would use cigarettes. Additionally, once a youth shows signs of nicotine dependence and addiction, it can be very challenging to quit.

Most youth who vape choose to discretely vape at school, including in the classroom, bathroom and school yard. This is despite "no vaping" policies at schools.

Vaping, stress and anxiety

Many individuals cite coping with stress or anxiety as a motivator for vaping. Nicotine creates an immediate sense of relaxation, so people who smoke associate it with stress and anxiety relief. However, research has shown that nicotine increases your heart rate and your blood pressure, which can mimic some symptoms of anxiety and trick your brain into feeling anxious. Withdrawal from nicotine can also increase feelings of anxiety or depression, making it more difficult to quit.

Tips to quit or reduce vaping

While you may want the youth in your life to quit vaping immediately, it's important to develop a trusting relationship and explore the reasons why they are vaping in the first place.

Why do youth vape?

Youth vape for a variety of reasons. It's important to discuss the reasons why the youth in your life are vaping to help them reduce or stop. Some of the reasons youth vape include:

- Curiosity about what vaping is and feels like
- Peer pressure and fitting in with friends
- The feeling of a "head rush" or "buzz" was cited by youth as the best part of vaping
- Enjoying the flavours
- Feeling of relaxation to cope with stress and anxiety
- Belief that vaping is harmless or safer than other forms of tobacco such as cigarettes

Take a harm reduction approach

It can be helpful to take a harm reduction approach to help the youth reduce vaping with the goal of quitting. Harm reduction is an approach that helps people stay safer while using substances, including nicotine.

By using a harm reduction lens, we meet youth where they are and work alongside them as they travel along their individual health and wellness journeys, without shame or judgement. Indigenous harm reduction goes one step further to include cultural knowledge and traditions.

Harm reduction approaches for vaping can include:

- Considering the root cause of the vaping. If the youth is undergoing a stressful time at home or school, what supports are locally available to help them with this journey?
- Lengthening the amount of time between waking up and the first vape of the day
- Trying mindful vaping by setting times throughout the day to vape rather than vaping whenever you feel like it
- Choosing a vape juice with a lower dose of nicotine
- Considering the cost of vape pens and cartridges. Is there anything else the youth would rather be spending on or saving their money for?
- Discussing the health risks that come with vaping. It may be particularly helpful to discuss with an Elder or someone who knows the challenges of quitting commercial tobacco products or nicotine.

MORE RESOURCES

For more information and resources on quitting or reducing commercial tobacco or vaping products visit fnha.ca/respectingtobacco

REFERENCES

- 1 Health Canada Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/preventing-kids-teens.html>
- 2 Muthumalage et al. (2020a). Chemical constituents involved in e-cigarette, or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).
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National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US) Office on Smoking and Health, 2016. E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/e-cigarettes/pdfs/2016_sgr_entire_report_508.pdf
- 3 E-cigarette flavored pods induce inflammation, epithelial barrier dysfunction, and DNA damage in lung epithelial cells and monocytes Muthumalage et al. 2019