

How do I talk to my kids about e-cigarettes?

Hey adults, We know that part of our role as parents and carers to talk with the children and young people in our lives about the importance of health and safety. Easier said than done right? That's why we're here to help! The mission? To empower your kids to make responsible decisions, now and in the future.

Here are some tools that can help turn challenging conversations into memorable moments.

KNOW THE FACTS

What's vaping?

Vapes are battery operated devices that heat liquid until it becomes an aerosol.

It's important to understand that the "vapour" is not like steam – it's a mixture of tiny aerosol particles that are breathed in and out of the lungs. In fact, many of them stick to the inside of the lungs or pass into the blood.

The addictive drug nicotine has been found in almost all of the vaping products that have been tested in Australia – even those that say they do not contain nicotine.

Vapes also contain other harmful chemicals which can also be found in nail polish remover, weed killer and cleaning products.



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What's the issue?

Many young people are under the misconception that e-cigarettes are safe or “safer”. But this is not true.

MYTH: Vaping is harmless.

FACT: There have been studies showing that young people who vape are three times more likely to smoke cigarettes later in life. This is because of the addictive nicotine contained in vapes.

Young people are at a higher risk of becoming dependent or addicted to nicotine as their brains are still developing. This is dangerous because nicotine addiction can affect a young person's concentration, sleep, memory and mood.

Also, the long-term effects of vaping on health are still being researched, remember, it took over 50 years for the harms of smoking to be fully understood.

MYTH: Most primary school-aged kids think “everyone” in high school vapes, and this can be a worry for them.

FACT: While the rates of vaping have gone up in the last few years, the majority of young people do not vape. New laws coming in early 2024 will make disposable vapes and flavorings illegal, and this is expected to result in a further decrease in the number of young people vaping.

At Life Ed, we teach the following steps: “Stop, take a breath, ask the questions, and get answers from reliable sources before making a decision.”



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KNOW HOW TO APPROACH THE ISSUE

Here are some tips that can help you talk to your children about vaping:

Choose the right time and place

Take advantage of “teachable moments” – those times when you might see something in the media, or see a discarded vape on the ground. Try taking your cue from what you observe and start the conversation in a relaxed, casual way.

Young people often feel uncomfortable talking one-on-one and face-to-face, like at the dinner table.

Choose a time when you won’t feel rushed and a place where you both feel relaxed, like when you’re riding in the car or walking together. We call these “sideways conversations”.

Appeal to their good judgement

Children and teens make smart decisions every day. Encourage them by talking about the fact that most young people don’t vape, and ask them what they think about the “costs” of vaping such as how much they cost to buy, how a nicotine addiction could affect a person at school, the costs to the environment of the waste made by disposable vapes, the impact on relationships with others in their lives etc.

Avoid using scare tactics It’s important to avoid drama and hype about vaping. Instead, encourage critical thinking by learning the facts and sharing them with your child in a two-way conversation.



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Ask open-ended questions

Instead of asking yes or no questions, ask open-ended questions that encourage participation. If you're genuinely curious, your teen will be less likely to get defensive.

Listen to their answers, ask more questions and keep the lines of communication open.

Keep the conversation going

Once you open the door to the topic, in a calm and respectful way, your young person will know that you are able to talk about these issues without being stressed or angry.

Offer to get information and learn with them and remind them that you think they are awesome and you are available to talk to them about these things at any time.

Conversation starters

- What do you think about vaping?
- Have you seen young people vaping? (don't react, just listen)
- Do you know what is in vapes?
- What do you know about what's in the aerosol?
- How much money would someone spend on vapes if they were addicted to nicotine?
What else could they do with that money?
- Why would you choose not to vape?
- What advice would you give your friends about vaping?

