

How to Talk to Kids About Vaping (by Age)

As an adolescent medicine specialist, Jennifer Woods, MD, talks to teens and tweens about a lot of hot-button issues, from drugs to sex. At the top of her list right now: vaping.

Half of Colorado teens have tried it, and most of them don't know the risks. More than 60 percent of them don't even realize vape products contain nicotine.

"If you wait until your kid is 13 to start talking about this stuff, that may be too late," she says. "It's like, 'Do I really talk to my 10-year-old about vaping?' Yes, but not in the same way you'd talk to a 15-year-old."

How, then? Dr. Woods breaks it down:

Older children and tweens (ages 10 to 12):

Kids this age are still very concrete: Things are right and wrong. There's not much grey area for a tween, and they have a difficult time understanding consequences.

"It's all about, 'What do you know about vaping? Are there people at school who do that?' They can answer those kinds of concrete questions," says Dr. Woods.

At this age, a talk with parents might be their first introduction to the topic. That's a good thing. As an early source of information, parents can exert a big influence on how kids think about something like vaping when it comes along.

Young teens (ages 13 to 15):

Young teens are starting to understand nuance and abstraction, but they're still unable to anticipate consequences in the same way as adults. As a result, this age group tends to be the highest risk-takers — and they're likely to have tried vaping already.

"If they have, don't have a meltdown," says Dr. Woods. "Find out where they're at."

For example, parents might ask about quitting — but with the understanding that their teen might not want to. That can be frustrating, Dr. Woods acknowledges. But there are constructive ways to approach it. Parents can set boundaries (in this family we don't use nicotine products, and that includes vaping) and offer help (what can we do to help you cut down?).

By calmly talking about the issue, rather than turning it into a power struggle, parents can slowly but surely change how kids think about their choices.

Older teens (ages 16 to 18):

"Where a 10-year-old is going to be like, 'What's Juuling,' with a 16-year-old, it's more like, 'Oh, yeah, everybody does that,'" says Dr. Woods. "But they might have some questions for you."

Even as older teens are developing more independence from their parents, they're still perhaps likelier than they might seem to care what their parents think — and to take that to heart when they make decisions. While they might pretend to be annoyed by parents' interest in their lives, at heart they crave it.

"It's about follow-up," says Dr. Woods. "They might think, 'Oh, they're just asking to ask, but they don't really care because they haven't asked me again.' By following up, it's like, 'I do care. I am in your space. I'm not trying to take away your world and independence, but I want to be a part of it. I'm interested in it.' That goes a long way."



"Ugh, mom." (How to bring it up)

First things first: "You're probably not going to be at breakfast like 'Okay, kids, let's talk about vaping,'" says Dr. Woods. "That's awkward."

Instead, jump on opportunities as they come up naturally: Someone vaping on TV, someone talking about vaping, someone vaping in a parking lot.

"It'll come up," says Dr. Woods. "When it does, be ready to talk about it."



E-Cigarettes: What You Need to Know

What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol produced by an electronic cigarette, or e-cigarette. E-cigarettes are battery-operated smoking devices that create a heated vapor of nicotine and other chemicals.



E-cigarettes are also called: e-cigs, vape pens, pods, pod mods



E-cigarettes are odorless and smokeless. They are easy to conceal and often look like a flash drive, ballpoint pen or stylus.



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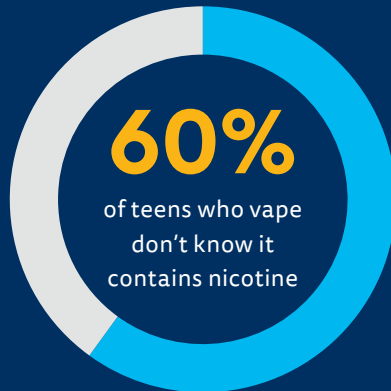
of Colorado teens report vaping at least once.

Colorado youth are vaping at **2X** the national average and at the **highest rate** of 37 states surveyed.



JUUL

is the most common brand



NO ID

required to buy vape and e-cig products online

Facts about e-cigarettes

Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance, as well as a mix of other chemicals

1 Nicotine exposure needed to create lasting effects on the adolescent brain



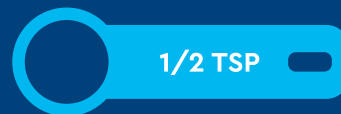
1 JUUL

Cartridge contains the nicotine of a pack of cigarettes



1/2 tsp.

The amount of liquid nicotine it takes to kill or seriously hurt a small child



By adulthood, teen nicotine users face:

- Nicotine addiction
- Effects on the brain, including lower cognitive function, more impulsivity and shorter attention spans



We don't yet know the effects of e-cigarette use on the heart and lungs.



Additionally, recent studies show that young people who use e-cigarettes are **four times more likely** to start smoking cigarettes.

Liquids in e-cigarettes (also called "juice") can cause poisoning if they are swallowed or come into direct contact with the skin.

Learn more and take action at [ChildrensColorado.org/Vaping](https://www.childrenscolorado.org/vaping).

Sources: National Institutes of Health, December 2018 Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, July 2018

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