



Teens and Vaping: What Parents Need to Know

*Rapidly growing trend ignores
cognitive, health risks*



Use of e-cigs and vape pens among teens is exploding around the U.S. with use increasing by 80% among high schoolers and 50% among middle schoolers since last year. In late August the Centers for Disease Control reported nearly 200 cases of lung illness and one death possibly related to vaping. Parents may be caught unaware of how widespread this new trend is, know little about what vaping is or know the signs that a student may have developed a new (and risky) habit.

What is an e-cigarette?

Vaping, e-cigs, JUUL pens and electronic hookahs are all electronic smoking devices, and are designed as alternatives to traditional cigarettes. When a mechanism inside the e-cig device heats the liquid, it produces a vapor that the user inhales. Typically, these devices contain nicotine, flavoring, chemicals and other ingredients. E-cigs can contain sweet or candy flavors, traditional tobacco flavors or THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). E-cigs come in a variety of shapes and sizes such as the tiniest of USB flash drives or a regular ball point pen or stylus.

What is JUULing?

JUUL is one of the most popular brands of e-cigs, and contains a disposable pod of liquid that is offered in a variety of flavors like fruit punch, bubble gum or blueberry muffin. Since 2017, California-based JUUL has taken over the U.S. e-cig market, with sales skyrocketing more than 800%. One reason for its probable popularity is that JUUL pods contain almost twice as much nicotine (the addictive substance in cigarettes) as other e-cig brands. Each pod contains as much nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes. JUUL devices look like a slim USB flash drive, and recharge by plugging into a computer. These devices often “hide in plain sight” at home and in classrooms and emit little or no visible vapor when used.

Can e-cigs be used for marijuana products?

Yes, pods containing marijuana, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) or THC wax are available for e-cigs. These pods are difficult to distinguish from any other e-cig pod and can easily be swapped for traditional nicotine flavor pods.

What is Clovis Unified’s policy on e-cigs?

Purchase and use of e-cigs or vape pens is illegal for anyone under 18. Use, sale or possession of e-cigs is not allowed on Clovis Unified property. Consequences for possession, sale or use of these devices during school or school-related activities can result in suspension and/or expulsion, referral to community counseling programs or law enforcement, arrest or transfer/ alternative placement.

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“I have teens who are proud of their ability to vape in class without getting caught. My experience is not unique; it reflects the national data. Recent surveys suggest over 2 million middle and high school students in the U.S. are routinely vaping. That’s about 10 percent of our kids, and that’s a lot.”

Dr. Natasha Burgert
US News & World Report, July 2018

Start a Conversation: Ask your child if they’ve ever heard of e-cigs or vaping, and if so, what do they think about it?



E-cig devices come in a variety of shapes, like these collected at a CUSD school.

Can my child become addicted to e-cigs?

While e-cigs have been marketed as “safer” than traditional cigarettes, they contain extremely high levels of nicotine. The developing teenage brain is particularly vulnerable and prone to addiction, and nicotine has proven to be highly addictive and difficult to break away from even for adults. While youth may believe they are only inhaling flavors with no harmful chemicals, that is not the case. Health experts warn that any product containing nicotine should be avoided because of its addictive properties as well as the negative health impacts that come along with its use like respiratory problems, acne, dehydration and decreased academic performance. Pods containing THC products pose additional health and academic risks. Health experts with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also warn that e-cig use increases the likelihood of later becoming addicted to traditional tobacco products.

Some studies have also pointed to an increased correlation between the use of e-cigs and likely use of marijuana or cannabis oil.

Are there other health risks posed by e-cig products?

Liquid nicotine is poisonous if ingested and pods pose a safety risk, especially around young children who may accidentally consume pod contents. Teens often don't think in terms of these types of risks, but it is especially important for families with young children in the household to be aware of the dangers posed by liquid nicotine. E-cigs have also been known to catch fire while stored in a pocket or backpack, causing serious burns.

Isn't this a heavily regulated industry with health safeguards in place?

Electronic smoking devices are not currently regulated. Without regulation, the industry is not required to disclose what e-cigs contain or to say how much nicotine or other chemicals they use. In September, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued warnings to 1,300 retailers citing concerns that they have not closely monitored sales of e-cigs to minors, and warned four major manufacturers of e-cigs that they could be shut down if they did not show immediate evidence of plans to reduce the availability of their products to youth.

Signs That Your Child Might Be Vaping

Because e-cigs and vape pens do not “smoke” like cigarettes, it may be hard to know if they are being used by your child. Vapor from e-cigs can be odorless or smell sweet, making it difficult to detect. Signs your child may be vaping include:

- ✓ **THUMB DRIVES THAT AREN'T THUMB DRIVES:** E-cigs, and vape and JUUL pens hide in plain sight by looking just like a regular pen, thumb drive or stylus. The devices also have parts that need to be replaced, like wires, cotton balls, or liquid pods (small containers to hold nicotine “juice”). If you see these items around your house, take another look. They could be JUUL or vape pens or devices.
- ✓ **INCREASED THIRST AND/OR NOSE BLEEDS:** Vaping is hygroscopic, which means the process removes hydration from the skin, mouth and throat. You might notice your child craving water and increasing their consumption of liquids; experiencing nose bleeds; or becoming dehydrated. Extremely dry skin is another possible sign.
- ✓ **RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES:** Because nicotine inflates the lungs, doctors warn that some respiratory illnesses including pneumonia can be linked to vaping by introducing bacteria or fluid into the lining of the lungs.
- ✓ **DECREASED TASTE SENSATION:** Lack of moisture in the mouth can also lead to decreased ability to detect flavor. If your teen who usually enjoys mild food is suddenly reaching for the salt or enjoying unusually spicy flavors, it could be a sign he or she has started vaping.
- ✓ **SWEET SCENTS:** E-cig and vape liquids are marketed under sweet flavors that appeal to youth such as fruit loops, mint and bubble gum, and don't smell like traditional nicotine cigarettes. If you start catching whiffs of sweet odors that can't be traced back to a food source it could be a warning sign.
- ✓ **REDUCED CAFFEINE USE:** Studies have shown that nicotine plus caffeine can cause anxiety and mood swings, and users of vaping products often reduce their caffeine intake as a result.
- ✓ **ACNE OUTBREAKS:** If your teen is suddenly experiencing bad breakouts on skin that is otherwise under control, it could be due to nicotine use.