

Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents



## **BEFORE THE TALK**

Know the facts.

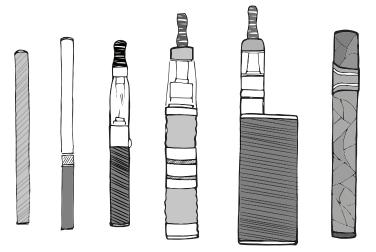
• Get credible information about e-cigarettes and young people at E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov.

### Be patient and ready to listen.

- Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue.
- Remember, your goal is to have a conversation, not to deliver a lecture.
- It's OK for your conversation to take place over time, in bits and pieces.

### Set a positive example by being tobacco-free.

• If you use tobacco, it's never too late to quit. For free help, visit smokefree.gov or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.



### START THE CONVERSATION

#### Find the right moment.

- A more natural discussion will increase the likelihood that your teen will listen. Rather than saying "we need to talk," you might ask your teen what he or she thinks about a situation you witness together, such as:
  - » Seeing someone use an e-cigarette in person or in a video.
  - » Passing an e-cigarette shop when you are walking or driving.
  - Seeing an e-cigarette advertisement in a store or magazine or on the internet.

### Ask for support.

- Not sure where to begin? Ask your health care provider to talk to your teen about the risks of e-cigarettes.
- You might also suggest that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches, or counselors whom you know are aware of the risks of e-cigarettes.
- These supportive adults can help reinforce your message as a parent.

### **ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS**

Here are some questions and comments you might get from your teen about e-cigarettes and some ideas about how you can answer them.

#### Why don't you want me to use e-cigarettes?

- Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Right now, your brain is still developing, which means you are more vulnerable to addiction. Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and using nicotine can change your brain to make you crave more nicotine. It can also affect your memory and concentration. I don't want that for you!
- E-cigarettes contain chemicals that are harmful. When people use e-cigarettes, they breathe in tiny particles that can harm their lungs.

• The cloud that people exhale from e-cigarettes can expose you to chemicals that are not safe to breathe.

### What's the big deal about nicotine?

- Your brain is still developing until about age 25. The Surgeon General reported that nicotine is addictive and can harm your brain development.
- Using nicotine at your age may make it harder for you to concentrate, learn, or control your impulses.
- Nicotine can even train your brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs like meth and cocaine.



• I don't say this to scare you, but I want you to have the facts because nothing is more important to me than your health and safety.

## Aren't e-cigarettes safer than conventional cigarettes?

- Because your brain is still developing, scientific studies show that it isn't safe for you to use any tobacco product that contains nicotine, including e-cigarettes.
- Whether you get nicotine from an e-cigarette or a cigarette, it's still risky.
- Some e-cigarette batteries have even exploded and hurt people.

## I thought e-cigarettes didn't have nicotine – just water and flavoring?

- I used to think that too. But many e-cigarettes have nicotine. There are also other chemicals in them that can be harmful.
- Let's look at the Surgeon General's website on e-cigarettes (E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov) together so you can see for yourself.

# I (or my friends) have tried e-cigarettes and it was no big deal.

- I appreciate your honesty. In the future, I hope you (or your friends) will stay away from e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, including cigarettes. Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Next time we go to the doctor, let's ask about the risks of nicotine, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products.

### You used tobacco, so why shouldn't I?

- If I could live my life over again, I never would have started smoking. I learned that people who smoke cigarettes are much more likely to develop, and die from, certain diseases than people who don't smoke. This was really scary, so I quit smoking.
- Quitting was really hard, and I don't want you to go through that. The best thing is to not start at all.



## **KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING**

Many parents find that texting is a great way to reach their teens. Here are some suggestions for text messages that might catch your teen's attention. And, you can easily share pages of the website (E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov) with your teen.



Look for this symbol, click it, type in the message you want or use the message provided, and share with your teen via Facebook, Twitter, or email.

### Connect and encourage.

- You always liked science. Check out the science about e-cigarettes and young people: **E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov**
- Getting off nicotine is hard but I'm so happy I quit. Don't make that mistake and get addicted. Smoking and tobacco use, including using e-cigarettes, are unsafe for young people.

### Remind and repeat.

- Most teenagers don't use e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes with nicotine can mess with your brain, and your brain is still developing until you are at least 25.
- You might be tempted by e-cigarette flavors, but inhaling certain flavorings that have been found in some e-cigarettes can be harmful.

### Share facts and resources.

- Just learned that many e-cigarettes have nicotine in them. That's the drug that makes cigarettes so addictive. Nicotine can also mess with your brain development.
- Just saw a report from the Surgeon General that e-cigarettes can mess with how your brain develops and might even affect your mood and focus. Please don't use any products that contain nicotine.
- Hope none of your friends use e-cigarettes around you. Even breathing the cloud they exhale can expose you to nicotine and chemicals that can be dangerous to your health.





**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** Office on Smoking and Health

