

Vaping prevention 101

Vaping is the act of inhaling vapor from electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes. An e-cigarette is a battery run device that heats up a flavored nicotine solution to produce an aerosol or vapor. The solution, commonly known as an e-liquid, is a mixture of chemicals, typically nicotine, and potentially THC that either comes in or is placed in the device. These solutions can come in a wide range of flavors that make them appealing to kids. Terms like mods, vape pens, vapes, Juuls and e-cigs are all used to describe vaping devices.

Devices

Vaping devices have four parts: a tank/cartridge, a battery, a mouthpiece and an atomizer. These devices are either reusable or disposable. The tank/cartridge holds the nicotine solution. The battery powers the device, and some are rechargeable like a cell phone. The mouthpiece looks different depending on the device, but it is where users breathe in from or “pull off” of the device. The atomizer is a heating coil that heats up the liquid to turn it into a vapor. The devices can look like traditional cigarettes, but many are designed to look more like USB drives or high-tech pens.

Pods

A pod is another name for the cartridge that holds flavored nicotine or THC solution. The pods can be refillable or prefilled. Kids often become interested in vaping because the pods come in flavors like strawberry shortcake and banana. These substances have some FDA regulation, but with many black-market options available, the contents are difficult to monitor. The long-term health effects of the e-liquids are unknown.

Nicotine

Nicotine is a stimulant that is found in the solution that goes into the majority of vaping devices. Nicotine is extremely addictive, and some solutions have been found to have 59 mg/ml of nicotine, which is equal to one pack of cigarettes. Once inhaled, it takes less than 10 seconds to reach the brain. Teens engaging in vaping can harm their brain and can develop problems with attention, learning and impulse control.

The appeal

Preteens and teens are at an impressionable age, and vaping device companies use this knowledge to target this group, which has led to an increase in youth vaping. The “fun” flavors are attractive to youth and the products are designed to be sleek, small and easy to conceal. Some vaping devices have the capability to create large vapor clouds on the exhale. Kids attempt “tricks” with the clouds to draw attention. Many videos of influencers on social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram feature vaping products and tricks you can do with them.

What next?

Talking with students and your school community about the risks of vaping can create an open line of communication to help prevent kids from starting — and to help those who already vape quit. As more research findings come out regarding e-cigarettes, educators and school communities can stay current by turning to trusted resources offered by Children’s Wisconsin experts.



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