

# 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](http://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](http://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.



Wheeler

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### ***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](http://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.

## **Connecticut Resources**

**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
Tobacco Prevention and Education Program**  
[www.ct.gov/dmhas/](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/)

**Department of Public Health  
CT Quitline**  
[www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph)  
**1.800.QUIT-NOW**

## **National Resources**

**American Lung Association**  
[www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://www.SurgeonGeneral.gov)

[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

**Food and Drug Administration**  
[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

## **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](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)) with your teen.

### ***Connect and encourage.***

- You always liked science. Check out the science about e-cigarettes and young people: [E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://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.

