

# THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY HAS A KIDS MENU

[FlavorsHookKids.org](http://FlavorsHookKids.org)



# THE RUNDOWN

The tobacco industry hooks kids on vaping by using fun flavors that spark curiosity and make tobacco taste good. That puts teens at risk for a lifetime of nicotine addiction, health problems, and permanent brain changes.

Here's what we know:

- **In the last 2 years, vaping increased by 218% among middle schoolers and 135% among high schoolers.**
- **96% of high school kids in CA who vape use flavors.**
- **Teens are nearly 7x more likely to vape nicotine than adults.**
- **Marijuana vaping among youth increased by 58% in a single year.**
- **Teens who vape are 3x more likely than non-vapers to become daily cigarette smokers.**
- **The average age of youth and young adults who try smokeless tobacco, like chew or snus, for the first time is 16.**

Use this guide to help you keep your kids safe from flavored tobacco and vaping. Share it with parents, school leaders, and other decision makers. You'll find resources for helping teens quit, a list of telltale signs of vaping, and a visual guide to vape products. Get advice for talking to kids about vaping, find out how schools are combating the problem, and learn how to help your community fight back against the powerful tobacco industry.

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# CALIFORNIA'S FLAVORED TOBACCO LAW

## New law ends the sale of flavored tobacco



**Ends the sale of most flavored tobacco, including vapes and menthol cigarettes, at retailers.**



**Protects kids from the tobacco industry's flavored death- and disease-causing products.**



**Because this new law includes menthol cigarettes, it protects communities that have been ruthlessly targeted and killed by the tobacco industry for decades – like the African American/Black community.**



**Holds the tobacco industry accountable. Violations will result in a penalty and fines for tobacco retailers who sell these products.**




**Protects communities of color from further police harassment. The law was intentionally written to focus on the sale of flavored tobacco products, and it does not punish or criminalize individuals for possession, use or purchase.**



**Does not apply to the sale of flavored shisha/hookah, premium cigars over \$12, and loose-leaf pipe tobacco.**



A young woman with long brown hair is standing in a school bathroom, looking down at a small electronic device (likely a vape) she is holding in her hands. She is wearing a light pink t-shirt and dark pants. In the background, another student with a backpack is visible near a sink. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from a mirror and a window in the background.

# KNOW THE SIGNS OF VAPING

Are there sweet, fruity, or menthol smells coming from behind closed doors?

Are there flash drives or other school supplies you don't recognize in your kid's backpack or room?  
How about small vials or eye dropper bottles?

Have you come across unfamiliar chargers, coils, or batteries?

Is your teen spending more money than usual or making unexplained purchases?

Have there been changes in your kid's behavior such as increased mood swings, irritability, anxiety, impulsivity, or learning difficulties?

Is your teen suffering from more frequent headaches or nausea?



# TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEENS

## LISTEN

Whether or not your kids have tried vaping, they'll benefit from a good talk. And a good talk starts with listening. Let the kids tell you what it's like to be surrounded by teens who vape. These starter questions are a simple way in:

**Do you have friends who vape?**

**Are you curious about it?**

**Have you been offered a vape?**

**Have you tried it?**

**If so, what made you say yes?**

**If not, what made you say no?**

As kids move through middle and high school, they'll face new challenges. Support them every step of the way by keeping the conversation going. Did you ever feel pressured to smoke? You could talk about your experience, including how hard it was for you to quit. An open dialogue is far more effective than one big lecture.

## BLAME FLAVORS

How has vaping grown so fast? Blame flavors. 96% of high school kids in CA who vape use flavors. Most say flavors are why they use vapes. No surprise, since fun flavors trick kids into thinking vaping is harmless. Yet the chemicals the tobacco industry uses to create those flavors may damage your lungs, too. Some flavors may increase the likelihood of addiction by messing with dopamine, the brain's "feel-good" chemical. Help kids understand that by hooking them on flavors, including menthol, the tobacco industry profits.

## TALK SCIENCE

The main things kids (and adults) know about nicotine is that it's addictive. But addiction is only the beginning. Teens should understand that nicotine is brain poison. It changes the way connections form in the brain, making it harder for kids to learn and pay attention. As if teen years weren't hard enough, nicotine can also increase anxiety, mood swings, and irritability. Getting hooked on nicotine puts kids at risk for addiction to other substances, too.

## LEARN MORE

Visit [PAVe](#) (Parents Against Vaping e-cigs) for a fact-filled toolkit and links to helpful websites and videos.

Use Stanford's [anti-vaping toolkit](#) to get downloadable presentations, worksheets, and activity guides.

Get the California Department of Education's [e-cigarette toolkit](#).

Learn from the American Heart Association partnership about the tobacco industry's [insidious role in hooking kids](#).

Get tips from the U.S. Surgeon General on [how to talk to your kids](#) about vaping.

# BE PREPARED FOR EXCUSES

Kids are getting a ton of misinformation about vaping online. Here's how parents can respond to some common excuses.

## KID:

It's not mine.

## ADULT:

I hope it's not yours, but I get that you might be tempted to try vaping. I'm worried because vaping can be addictive and can change the way your brain works. Plus, I know the tobacco industry makes vapes that look like flash drives so they're easy to hide. It's not that I don't trust you, but you should know that I'm paying attention.

## KID:

Vaping is safer than smoking.

## ADULT:

There's actually nothing safe about vaping. It's not water vapor like some people think. The vapor is actually aerosol that contains metals, particulates, and toxic chemicals. And many vapes use nicotine salts rather than regular nicotine. Salts are inhaled more easily and absorbed faster than regular nicotine.

## KID:

Nicotine's just a little buzz.

## ADULT:

Nicotine does release a chemical called dopamine in the brain, which might make you feel good temporarily. But don't be tricked. Nicotine is a neurotoxin, which means it's a poison that affects the brain. When you're young and your brain is still developing, nicotine can do lasting, even permanent, damage.

## KID:

It's not nicotine. It's just water and flavors.

## ADULT:

It's not obvious to kids, or even grownups, that something that tastes minty, fruity, or sweet is actually an addictive drug that can have long-term effects on a kid's developing brain. The chemicals the tobacco industry uses to create those flavors may damage your lungs, too.

# HELP KIDS UNCOVER THE FACTS

When it comes to learning the facts about vaping, help kids figure it out their way.

## GOOGLE IT

Teens are digital natives, and a quick Google search will show them how the tobacco industry has marketed vapes to kids. Seeing how Juul and other companies set out to trick kids into vaping might trigger your teen's BS radar.

If you're going to lead the exercise with your kid, do some reading yourself first. Start with this article: [Juul bought ads on Cartoon Network, other youth sites, suit says](#). Or [download this PDF](#) from Stanford researchers so you can see what Juul was up to from the very beginning.

Use the PDF to point out the following marketing tricks to kids:

**Youthful models**  
**Their body language**  
**Their outfits**  
**Sex appeal**  
**The colorful, trendy backgrounds**  
**Hashtags all over social media**  
**Juul's presence at music fests**  
**Juul's free sampling events**

Ask teens to decide for themselves who they think Juul was trying to reach. Chances are, they'll spot the hypocrisy in a flash.

## HISTORY REPEATING

Teens (and adults) might be surprised to learn the tobacco industry has a decades-long history of trying to market to kids. In the 70s, the federal government mandated that cigarette commercials be taken off the air. In the 90s, the cartoon "Joe Camel" was abolished. In 2009, flavored cigarettes (except menthol) were federally banned. And in 2019, new restrictions were put in place by the FDA, albeit with [dangerous loopholes](#). Visit the [Smithsonian site](#) to give teens a glimpse of the past and to show them how the e-cig industry is using Big Tobacco's playbook.

## BIG KIDS UNITE

Maybe teens want a shot at impacting the epidemic themselves. With more and more kids vaping, high schoolers could model safe behavior. Connect with California's [Friday Night Live](#) for ideas on how teens can tackle this health topic. Or have teens reach out to their school administrators or counselors for other ways to get involved. It could be a science or health project, or it could be applied to community service hours. Ask your teens if they'd be up for putting their leadership skills to work for California's greater good.

# WHAT IF MY TEEN IS ADDICTED?

## CALL OR TEXT A HELPLINE

The [No Vape chat line](#) connects your kid (or you) to a trained counselor. Text NoVapes to 66819 or call 1-844-8-NO-VAPE/1-844-866-8273.

[My Life My Quit](#) connects kids with a supportive, knowledgeable coach. Text Start My Quit to 1-855-891-9989 or call.

## DOWNLOAD AN APP

[This Is Quitting](#) is text-message support app for teens. Text DITCHJUUL to 88709.

[Smoke Free Teen](#) has tools for quitting, including what to expect during the first few days.

## ENLIST THE PEDIATRICIAN

Ask your pediatrician to talk about vaping with your teen. Doctors often explain things in a way kids will listen.

## BE SUPPORTIVE

Quitting is hard. As many nicotine addicts and recovering addicts will tell you, it usually takes more than one try. Keep encouraging and empathizing with your teen. Reward the incremental progress and accept the setbacks as part of the process.



# WHAT SCHOOLS ARE DOING ABOUT THE PROBLEM

Even during the pandemic, the tobacco industry has continued to target teens. Which means that as schools reopen, teachers and administrators have even more things to watch out for. Here are some of the many ways schools are addressing the vaping crisis.

## ADMINISTRATORS

Adopting a tobacco-free policy that includes e-cigarettes in the definition of “tobacco product” and laying out enforcement and other implementation procedures.

Sharing resources such as this printable guide or [FlavorsHookKids.org](https://www.FlavorsHookKids.org) with administrators to spread the word on school Facebook pages, websites, or in email announcements to parents.

## STAFF

Educating teachers, counselors, nurses, coaches, custodians, and other staff so they know what the different e-cigarette/vaping products look like. These devices are changing all the time.

Posting “No tobacco” signs and announcing reminders at sporting events and other gatherings.

## STUDENTS

Engaging students in media literacy to counter the tobacco industry’s influence.

Encouraging kids to visit the nurse/ wellness counselor at school for quitting resources like helplines (1-844-8-NO-VAPE) and apps ([thisisquitting.com](https://thisisquitting.com)).

## PARENTS

Hosting virtual or in-person informational parent nights featuring public health experts, local doctors, and law enforcement representatives.

Enlisting the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) to adopt an anti-vaping resolution; host educational sessions or activities about vaping; host educational forums for parents, students, and community members; and improve campus security with more frequent monitoring of locations where students vape. Be sure to attend to voice your concerns.

# VAPING, TEENS & COVID-19

**We need to protect their lungs. The tobacco industry wants to protect its profits.**

Saying that vaping is bad for human lungs is an understatement. It has become clear that vaping can harm lungs at the cellular and organ levels and worsen the body's ability to fight off respiratory infections, just like smoking can. And with COVID-19 unlikely to disappear any time soon, this means anyone who vapes is at increased risk.

We know that smoking and vaping are associated with an inflammatory process in the lining of the lungs, the very place where highly contagious COVID-19 causes its most serious damage. We also know that teens vape nicotine at a higher rate than adults, and that in the United States, COVID-19 devastated minority communities. This puts teens, and especially teens of color, at risk for more severe COVID-19 complications.

When the pandemic began, the tobacco industry could have paused pushing its deadly products on these populations. Instead, it continued to market kid-friendly vape flavors like Cotton Candy and Blue Razz. And they've been selling menthol cigarettes to Black communities as aggressively as ever. Would they admit it? Hardly. The tobacco industry has run disinformation campaigns for decades, lying to people to boost their own profits.

Not even COVID-19 stopped the tobacco industry from promoting products that cause serious harm and even death. But we won't let their actions go unanswered, and until they're out of business we'll keep providing Californians the facts they need to stay healthy and safe.

**[Click for an update from UC Davis's Dr. Tong on how smoking and vaping can lead to COVID-19](#)**



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