



Quebec Council on
Tobacco and Health



Vaping among teenagers should be taken seriously

Let's talk about it.





Great strides have been made to steer young people away from vaping, i.e. the ban of flavors and of vaping devices with attractive shapes. Even so, many young people continue to be attracted by these ever-changing products.

However, vaping products do present a health hazard for young people, mainly due to their high concentration of nicotine. Nicotine dependence sets in much more quickly in teenagers than in adults.

So after a few weeks, or even a few days of vaping, they may already be highly addicted.



That's why your role is essential! Having a discussion about vaping with your teenager can make a big difference in nicotine initiation and consumption. So it's a good idea to start talking to them as soon as they start high school.

PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION

Get informed

First off, it is important that you update your knowledge about vaping. This will help you navigate the discussion with confidence.

What is there to know about vaping?

1. Vaping is dangerous to physical and mental health alike

The harmful effects of vaping are many and varied. Some of the most scientifically documented consequences include:

- **A weakened brain** : Nicotine is present in most liquids and is highly addictive. This chemical disrupts the brain's equilibrium and impedes its development. Studies confirm that nicotine impairs teenagers' memory and concentration. It could also encourage the onset of psychological disorders such as depression or anxiety.
- **Damaged lungs and increased cardiac risk** : Vaping affects the respiratory system and has been associated with symptoms such as coughing, increased mucus production, wheezing and shortness of breath. In addition, vaping can contribute to the onset of bronchitis. Furthermore, teenagers who vape are 48% more likely to develop asthma than those who have never done so. Vaping also increases risks to the cardiovascular system: inflammation of the vessels, increased heart rate, high blood pressure.
- **A weakened immune system** : Vaping could reduce the body's ability to resist viral and bacterial infections.

2. Vapes contain a high concentration of nicotine

90% of young people who vape use a liquid containing nicotine. Nicotine-free vaping products do exist but should not be considered a safe alternative. In fact, aerosol inhalation has major health consequences. Although the Tobacco Control Act limits the concentration to 20 mg/mL (equivalent to half a pack of cigarettes per cartridge), people who vape can easily consume several cartridges in a single day. This large quantity of nicotine contributes to their rapid addiction. Moreover, vaping quadruples the risk of taking up cigarette smoking. Vapes with nicotine in the form of nicotine salts allow you to inhale large quantities of nicotine without irritating your throat. Finally, some teenagers may use nicotine excessively to create a buzz.



3. A vape contains a number of chemicals

Contrary to popular belief, vapes produce an aerosol, not steam. The aerosol actually contains very little water. The vaping liquid contains mainly propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, flavourings (tobacco) and additives. The vaporizer heats this mixture and produces an aerosol. The aerosol then releases chemicals such as toluene, which are dangerous to inhale, as well as heavy metals such as lead and chromium, which are toxic and carcinogenic. Also, as there are few ways to control liquids, it is impossible to know the exact composition of the inhaled aerosol.

4. Vapes are “trendy” items for young people

With their high-tech design, vapes are perceived by young people as gadgets and fashion accessories rather than as tools to help adults quit smoking. This marketing strategy has created a new way of smoking that appeals to young people. It is particularly aimed at those who have never smoked cigarettes. Despite the ban on all flavours except tobacco and unflavoured, flavoured liquids may still be in circulation. In addition, the industry seems to be circumventing the law with flavoured additives similar to those banned on October 31, 2023, which are mixed into flavourless liquids. Called “flavour enhancers” and sold between potato chips and chocolate, these chemical additives present a real health risk.



BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

How to begin the conversation and initiate a dialogue

A conversation with your teenager should not give them the impression that they are being threatened or penalized. On the contrary, it is proof of your affection for them and should be marked by respect and a willingness to communicate. Stay open-minded and attentive; think of this conversation as a privileged moment with your teen. And remember: you are best positioned to understand them.

Helpful tips for the conversation

- Be considerate; do not judge.
- Focus on facts.
- Don't scare your teen.
- Be open-minded and attentive.

1. Choose your moment. Wait for the right opportunity

Plan a discussion or seize an opportunity (for example, if you both see someone vaping on the street or in a movie) to introduce the conversation. In any case, wait for the right time and start discussing this step by step, at your own pace. You may not be able to cover everything in one day! Allow yourself enough time to take in everyone's opinion and stay considerate.

2. Try to find out how much your teenager knows about vaping or their relationship to it

- What does your teen think of vaping?
- Is it popular at their school?
- Do they know people who vape?
- Have they ever been offered to try?
- Have they ever been tempted?

This can guide you through the rest of the conversation.

3. Set the record straight if you realize that your teenager's perception or knowledge is inaccurate

Take the opportunity to update their knowledge about vaping, just like you updated yours prior to the conversation. The idea here is to exchange with your teen, not to state a list of facts.

4. Remind your teen that you are always available for a discussion

Young people evolve over time, and their position towards vaping can change. Establish trust by telling your teenager that you are always willing to talk if he or she ever needs help.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS VAPING

Whether you've smoked or not, you have witnessed the devastating phenomenon of smoking. Encourage your youth – they have the power to be the first nicotine-free generation! First of all, ask them what they think about their consumption. Avoid getting too emotional, and focus on the facts rather than judging them. Don't try to dissuade them by fear-mongering; this strategy is ineffective.

You can also try and confirm their level of addiction. Go over the following list; nicotine dependence is present if three or more of these statements about vaping products applies.

- Feeling an irrepressible urge to use an electronic cigarette
- Not being able to complete an activity without vaping
- Losing control over their usage
- Experiencing symptoms of withdrawal (dizziness, fatigue, insomnia, coughing, constipation, hunger, craving sweets, irritability, pressure in the eyes or head)
- Developing a tolerance (need to increase usage in order to obtain the same effect)
- Spending more time vaping
- Using their savings to purchase vaping products
- Using vaping products when it is forbidden (disregarding rules); for example, skipping school to vape



Your teenager will need your support and care in order to quit vaping.

Here are a few tips to help them along the way:

- Help them set a quit date
- Suggest teaming up and asking one of their friends to quit together
- Help them make a list of reasons why they wish to quit vaping
- Teach them to recognize situations where they could be tempted to vape and how to avoid them
- Focus on other healthy habits, such as proper nutrition, exercise, sleep and stress management
- Celebrate and reward achievements to help them stay motivated
- Encourage them to be kind to themselves; the first attempt at quitting is not always successful
- Encourage them to seek professional help (from a doctor, a nurse, a pharmacist or their school's counselor)
- Be present
- Tell them about the Libair mobile app, designed to help young people give up vaping

AND IF YOU'RE A SMOKER OR VAPER ← YOURSELF?

Even if you're a smoker or vaper, make it clear that you disapprove of vaping. Don't underestimate the importance of your opinion to your teenagers. You have the power to positively influence them and reduce their desire to try vaping.

Be yourself and be authentic. Tell them why you started smoking or vaping, and how quickly the addiction took hold. Tell them how hard it is to stop. Finally, don't forget that young people are sensitive to money and well-being. Be aware that for many people, vaping is wrongly perceived as a "solution" for managing their anxiety. Don't hesitate to make connections between these topics and your consumption.

EXPLORE THE OTHER SIDE OF VAPING WITH YOUR TEENAGER

EPAV Média's webmagazine "[L'envers du vapotage](#)" explores the hidden side of vaping and covers a range of topics. In each of the three episodes, guests with different areas of expertise take turns talking about topics in the fields of physical health, mental health, the environment or finance.

Sharing a viewing session of one of the episodes of "L'envers du vapotage" with your teenager could – if you feel it's the right time – be a great opportunity to engage a discussion about vaping!

Watch an episode [here](#).



RESOURCES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



LIBAIR

Does your teen want to quit vaping? Suggest they download the **Libair** mobile app, a caring, one-to-one support program designed to help young people quit vaping.

EPAV MÉDIA

Your youngster wants to understand the hidden side of vaping. Suggest they follow the **EPAV Média** Instagram page and visit the epavmedia.ca microsite.

DROP THE ILLUSION

Are your young sporting enthusiasts interested in learning more about the effects of vaping on their health?

Suggest they visit droptheillusion.com.

“I QUIT NOW” SERVICES

If your child is showing signs of addiction, you can recommend that they consult the health professionals at their school (nurse, addiction counsellor, etc.) or the **“I Quit Now”** services:

- Free, confidential help that has proven effective for Quebecers who want to quit smoking
- Smoking cessation professionals are available to offer online help (iquitnow.qc.ca / jarrete.qc.ca), **telephone help** (1 866 JARRETE (1 866 527-7383)), **in-person help** at Quebec quit-smoking centres or help by **text message**.

