behind the smoke

WHAT CAREGIVERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT E-CIGARETTES and VAPING

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Protecting our children starts with understanding the risks they face. Vaping products can be easy to overlook, with devices that resemble everyday items and flavors that appeal to young people. These products can expose children to highly addictive nicotine and other harmful substances.

Parents and caregivers play an important role in prevention. Learning what to look for and having open, honest conversations can help children understand the dangers of vaping. If your child is already vaping, your support can help them take the first steps toward quitting.

The Office of Attorney General is committed to helping Pennsylvania families keep their children safe. This booklet offers information to help you recognize signs of vaping, talk with your child, and find support when it is needed. I encourage you to use it to start a conversation and keep that conversation going.

Sincerely,

Dave Sunday
Attorney General of Pennsylvania

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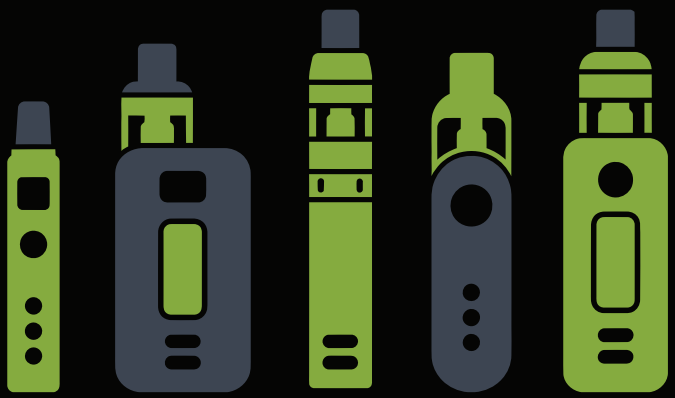
WHAT ARE E-CIGARETTES?

- Battery-operated devices that heat a liquid into an aerosol (or mist) that is inhaled
- Most commonly used tobacco product among teens
- Often called e-cigs, vape pens, disposables, pods/pod systems, mods/tanks, electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDS), e-hookahs, or smart vapes
- Some are disposable and designed for one-time use; others can be refilled and recharged
- Come in many shapes and sizes – some look like traditional tobacco products but others may look like common gadgets such as pens, flash drives, lip balm, asthma inhalers, phone chargers, or gaming controls
- Almost ALL contain nicotine – some contain the highest levels ever seen in tobacco products



WHAT LAWS APPLY TO VAPING IN PA?

- It is illegal for anyone UNDER 21 to:
  - Purchase or attempt to purchase tobacco/nicotine products
  - Falsely report age of at least 21 for the purpose of purchasing tobacco/nicotine products
  - Give tobacco/nicotine products to anyone under age 21

Pennsylvania's vape product directory

Nicotine vaping products must be listed in Pennsylvania's Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) Directory to be legally sold in PA. Being listed does not mean a product is safe or FDA-approved.

View the directory at: www.attorneygeneral.gov/ends-directory

To learn more about Pennsylvania's tobacco or nicotine sales laws, or to report a retailer for selling these products to someone under 21, visit the PA Department of Health's Tobacco Sales to Underage Purchasers webpage.

IT IS ILLEGAL FOR ANYONE TO POSSESS OR USE TOBACCO/NICOTINE PRODUCTS IN A SCHOOL BUILDING, SCHOOL BUS, OR ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.

WHY ARE E-CIGARETTES AND VAPES HARMFUL?

- Nicotine is highly addictive
  - Teens are even more prone to addiction than adults
  - Can negatively affect the ability to learn, maintain attention/focus, and control impulses
  - Can make anxiety and depression worse
- Can prime the brain for other addictions
- Contain other cancer-causing toxins
- Can damage lungs

ADDICTION IS FASTER and STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

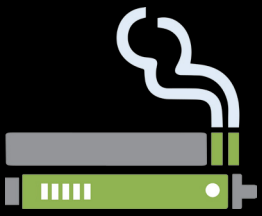
1 Month

1 in 4 teens who get addicted to nicotine are hooked within a month.

Possible signs of vaping:

- Unusual gadgets or packaging in the trash
- Sweet, fruity, or minty smell or sudden heavy use of air fresheners
- Frequent, short trips outside or to the bathroom
- Continual lipstick or lip balm application
- Frequent cough, bloody nose, or unexplained mouth sores
- Change in mood – more irritable or anxious
- Constant headaches, nausea
- Sudden difficulty concentrating
- Decreased academic performance

Many Attempts



Most teens report that it takes many attempts to quit using nicotine.

Unsuccessful at First

Of the teens who try to quit nicotine, **very few** are successful their first time.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT VAPING

- Start early
- Find the right time to bring it up:
  - If you see someone vaping
  - If you notice a vaping advertisement
  - If you pass a vape shop
- Be open, patient, and calm
- Make it a conversation – not a lecture
- Know the facts and stay informed
- Answer questions

Other helpful tips:

- Model healthy habits
- Look for warning signs and stealth vapes
- Keep the conversation going
  - Share new information as you hear it
- Seek out support
  - School counselor
  - Student Assistance Program referral through school
  - Healthcare providers

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD QUIT IF THEY ARE ADDICTED

- Make a quit plan
  - Choose a day to quit
  - Throw out supplies
  - Find substitutes for oral cravings
  - Manage stress
- Seek support
  - Smokefree Teen: Free, self-guided quitting tools and support for teens from the National Cancer Institute
    - teen.smokefree.gov

MAKE IT A CONVERSATION – NOT A LECTURE

- EX Program: Free digital quit program for ages 13+, developed by Truth Initiative with Mayo Clinic
  - truthinitiative.org/exprogram
- N-O-T (Not on Tobacco) program: American Lung Association's structured cessation program designed specifically for teens ages 13–19
  - lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/not-on-tobacco
- 1-800-QUIT-NOW: Free, confidential quit coaching by phone; connects callers with their state's tobacco quitline
- My Life, My Quit: Pennsylvania's free, youth-specific cessation program offering coaching by phone, live text or chat
  - pa.mylifemyquit.org

Additional resources:

- Partnership to End Addiction: VAPING: What Families Need to Know to Help Protect Children, Teens and Young Adults
- American Lung Association: Vaping Conversation Guide
- Truth Initiative: How to Talk to Your Child About Nicotine

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