

Vaping and Youth Factsheet

Vaping is and has been a growing concern for many caregivers, educators and health professionals for the past few years. [Vaping](#) is the act of inhaling an aerosol, often called *vapour* or *cloud*, which is produced by heating a liquid with a battery-powered device known as vapes and e-cigarettes. The liquid ("vape juice" or "e-juice") is sold in a variety of flavours that are appealing to youth.

It can be difficult for adults to know if a young person under their care is vaping. Some liquids are hard to smell and vapes can be small and [mimic the look of common objects](#) such as flash drives or pens.



Read on to learn more about important vaping facts and myths to help adults and children have informed conversations.

1. MYTH: Vapour products are harmless

Vapour products are marketed as a harmless alternative to smoking, which is misleading. As we continue to learn about the long term risks of vaping, the short-term health effects such as coughing, inflammation of the lungs and increased heart rate indicate a need for caution. Also, vape juices often have nicotine, a substance that can be toxic and lead to poisoning through ingestion or skin contact, especially for young kids and pets.

2. FACT: More school aged youth have tried vaping than smoking tobacco

Vaping among youth is on the rise. About 41% of Grade 7-12 students in BC have tried vaping while 21% have tried smoking. It is estimated that 20% of all vapers in Canada are teens.



3. MYTH: The "cloud" from a vape is just water

Vapour products do not produce smoke or steam, but rather an aerosol of fine particles of many substances: propylene glycol, glycerin, flavourings and other chemicals. Some might sound inoffensive because they are usually okay for ingestion, but they may harm the lungs.

Vape clouds may also contain heavy metals, like nickel, chromium and lead, and formaldehyde produced during the heating. Some of these substances have been linked to cancer and respiratory and heart disease.

4. MYTH: E-juice does not contain nicotine

Vapes usually have a psychoactive substance, the most common ones being nicotine (a stimulant found in tobacco) and THC (the main mind-altering chemical found in Cannabis). Besides being very addictive, nicotine changes activity on the attention, memory and learning areas of a developing teen's brain and can affect impulsivity and mood.

In BC all vaping products must contain either nicotine or cannabis, but never both combined. Unregulated products; however, might still be illegally available or purchased out of province. In the past, about half of the products labeled as "nicotine-free" were found to actually contain nicotine.

5. **FACT: Vaping may lead to smoking**

Unfortunately, after many years of steady decline in Canada and BC, smoking among youth seems to have stabilized, which is concerning. Vaping might have something to do with it. Nicotine, often present in vapes, is a highly addictive substance. Youth are more vulnerable to addiction because their brains are still developing. Studies show that teens who vape have a higher risk of starting to smoke, but the reason for it is still unclear.

6. **FACT: Vapour devices can be used to inhale other substances**

Some vaping devices can be modified to be used with unauthorized and potentially harmful substances. Informal sources of vaping liquids, including THC are risky and have been linked with [vaping associated lung injury \(VALI\)](#).

7. **MYTH: Vaping won't increase my risk of COVID-19**

Because it affects lung health, vaping may increase the risk of severe illness and complications from COVID-19. One early study found that the disease was 5 times more common in young people (13-24 years-old) who vaped and 7 times higher for those who vaped and smoked. Although the reason for the result is still unknown, it warrants caution.

8. **FACT: You can be a role model even if you use commercial tobacco or vapes**

Even if you smoke or vape, you can still be a good influence by not offering tobacco and vapes to other people and talking about your experience (e.g. how it's hard to quit).

Also use these products responsibly. Avoid using them in the presence of youth, at home or in the car, even when they are not with you to protect them from the chemicals in vapes and tobacco that stay in the air and on surfaces. Keep cigarettes, vapes, liquids and cartridges (including empty ones) out of the reach of children and pets to avoid poisoning. Dispose of cigarette butts and batteries in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

9. **MYTH - Kids won't listen to me**

Kids who receive helpful information about vaping from an adult are less likely to vape. Here are some tips to strike a conversation:

- ✓ Timing is key. Take advantage of situations like passing by a group of teens vaping or a person vaping on a TV show to bring up the topic.
- ✓ Help young people feel comfortable by building a positive and non-judgmental conversation on this and other topics.
- ✓ Listen and answer their questions truthfully.
- ✓ Encourage good decision making.
- ✓ Help kids build strategies for peer-pressure and coping with stress.

10. **MYTH: It's too late. They are already vaping**

Not all people that try vaping become dependent on nicotine and it may take a while for someone to become a daily vaper. Keep the topic in conversation and offer help to quit. Still, it can take multiple attempts for someone to successfully quit vaping. Doctors, nurses and counsellors can provide support. BC youth can also access help and information from [QuitNow](#) and free counselling through [Foundry BC](#).

11. **FACT: It is illegal to purchase or sell vapour products for minors**

Vapes and its liquids and cartridges are available on the internet and at local retailers. It is against the law to sell or provide any vapour products to someone under the age of 19. If you suspect someone is providing vapour products to minors, please contact the Tobacco and Vapour Prevention and Control Team at:

tobaccoandvape@interiorhealth.ca.



For more information and resources visit the [Tobacco and Vapour Prevention and Control](#) resource page on IH website.