E-Cigarettes and Adolescents: What It’s All About

E-cigarettes are electronic devices that are designed to deliver nicotine, flavorings, and other additives. They are the most commonly used tobacco product among US middle and high school students.

How do e-cigarettes work?
The user fills an e-cigarette with a liquid, which is heated by the device to produce an aerosol. The user inhales the aerosol into the lungs.

E-cigarettes may not look like cigarettes at all.
E-cigarettes come in different shapes and sizes. Some look like regular cigarettes. Others look like USB flash drives, pens, cigars, pipes, and other everyday items.

One brand is a favorite of middle and high school kids.
The brand is called JUUL (pronounced like jewel). A JUUL e-cigarette looks like a USB flash drive. All JUUL e-cigarettes deliver a high level of nicotine. JUUL refill pods come in a variety of flavors like mango and mint.

Kids use different names for e-cigarettes.
You may hear students use the terms “e-cigs,” “e-hookahs,” “vapes,” “vape pens,” “mods,” “tank systems,” or “JUULs.” Kids may refer to smoking e-cigarettes as “JUULing” or “vaping.”

Kids use e-cigarettes for various reasons.
- They believe they aren’t as harmful as other tobacco products.
- They have a friend or family member who is a user.
- They like the appealing flavors.
- E-cigarettes are easy to get and seem cool.
- Sometimes e-cigarettes can be used in places where smoking regular cigarettes isn’t allowed.

Kids see e-cigarette ads.
Middle and high school students see e-cigarette ads in retail stores, on television, in movies, on the Internet, and in magazines and newspapers.
Kids Think They’re Safe. They’re Not.

**E-cigarettes are harmful.**

- **They are not nicotine-free.** Most e-cigarettes deliver nicotine, a highly addictive drug that can harm brain development.
- **They are not “just water vapor.”** The aerosol from e-cigarettes may be harmful to the lungs and the cardiovascular system.
- **They are a dangerous stepping stone.** Using them in middle or high school makes a student more likely to smoke other tobacco products.
- **Students think, “I’ll just try one.”** Nearly 20% of kids who simply try an e-cigarette go on to become regular users.

**E-Cigarette usage among kids is going up—and fast.**

Research shows a significant increase in e-cigarette use between 2017 and 2018.

- The numbers are alarming.
  - 78% increase in e-cigarette use among high schoolers
  - 48% increase in e-cigarette use among middle schoolers

**1.5 million more students used e-cigarettes in 2018 vs 2017.**

Over 60% of teenagers believe that using an occasional e-cigarette is relatively safe.

(Statistics from the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey)

**What can you do?**

**Know the facts.**

Learn about e-cigarettes and their risks to young people.

**Pay attention.**

Students are likely using them at your school in hallways, bathrooms, and even in your classroom.

**Develop, implement, and enforce smoke-free school policies.**

Using any tobacco product—including e-cigarettes—is unsafe. Make sure students know that e-cigarettes are no exception.