



# FAMILY *Matters*

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## The Rise in Teen Vaping

There have been many recent news reports about the rise in use of vaping devices by teenagers. Vaping can come in the form of electronic cigarettes and/or Juuls. Electronic cigarettes are more noticeable while Juuls can be concealed quite easily, which can encourage use, even on school property. I've experienced a recent surge in request for services from parents whose teens are vaping. Frequently, these teens have been caught vaping in school and received suspensions as well as mandatory drug use evaluations. These consequences have been an effective deterrent for many teens.

In talking with the teens, they appear to be largely unaware of the adverse effects of vaping. They report that their main reasons for vaping are more social acceptance from peers, boredom and stress reduction via the smoke exhalation. Most teens in my practice report that vaping goes on in the school bathroom. While these teens don't often acknowledge this, the use of Juuls on school property may also be related to the teen's excitement of trying to get away with something forbidden since Juuls devices are often easily concealed.



Vaping devices entered the marketplace as a cessation method for adult smokers to stop smoking by gradually reducing nicotine levels. They are not intended for teenage recreational use a purchaser must be 18 years old to buy them in most states. Vaping devices are containers that have propellant liquids and usually a pod containing nicotine. A heating device along with the propellant liquid creates the vapor that is inhaled. Nicotine is an addictive substance and according to Web MD, can have adverse effects on teen brain development as well as memory and attention. Many of the chemicals that propel the vapor are carcinogenic. These include chemicals such as formaldehyde which is a carcinogen and diacetyl which can cause a lung disease called "popcorn lung." While vaping devices may be less harmful than real cigarettes, clearly there are significant carcinogenic concerns. Two recent studies have shown that those who use vaping devices for recreational use were 6 times more likely to try real cigarettes which should be a concern to most parents.

### So, what should parents do?

- Talk with your children about the harmful nature of the chemicals inherent in vaping products.
- If you suspect that your teen is vaping, check their room and backpack for possession of vaping paraphernalia.
- Monitor potential online purchases for vaping products by reviewing your credit card statement carefully and/or on-line access to the purchase of vaping products.
- Seek the services of a mental health professional familiar with substance use if you're unable to convince your child to stop vaping activities.
- Encourage your local middle and high schools to have policies on managing vaping on school property if they don't already have written policies in place.
- Be sure that retail establishments in your local community enforce legal age requirements for purchasing vaping paraphernalia.
- Encourage your legislators to regulate purchase and use of vaping devices.

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