

The Facts about Vaping

Vaping-What is it?

According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (NCASA) vaping is the, “act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol, often referred to as vapor, which is produced by an e-cigarette or similar device.”

Teens seem to have gotten the message that smoking real cigarettes is a bad idea but many are under the misapprehension that vaping is a safe alternative. According to the CDC vaping is all the rage among teens. High schoolers are doing it and increasingly, middle schoolers are as well.

The Delivery System

E-cigarettes were introduced to the mass market in 2007. Instead of smoke they produce an aerosol that looks like water vapor. That vapor can be delivered via any number of vaping devices (including e-cigarettes, vape pens, USB memory sticks called Juuls and advanced personal vaporizers which are also referred to as ‘MODS’). The e-cig looks like a standard cigarette, the vape pen looks like a large pen and the Juul like a thumb drive.

All vaping delivery systems have the following in common: a mouthpiece, a battery, a cartridge that holds the e-juice or e-liquid, and a heating component. The basics of the mechanism are that a heating element powered by the battery heats up the heating component which then turns the e-juice into a vapor which is inhaled into the lungs and then exhaled.

What is Inhaled?

NCASA states that, “The e-liquid in vaporizer products usually contains a propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin-based liquid with nicotine, flavoring and other chemicals and metals...The e-juice can contain varying amounts of nicotine. Some people use these devices to vape THC the chemical responsible for most of marijuana mind-altering effects...”

E-cigs can be used to vaporize opiates and synthetic substances as well. There are thousands of flavors of e-liquids.

Is Vaping Safe?

There are those who argue that vaping is less harmful than smoking, but **almost no one asserts that vaping is entirely safe.** It’s important to reiterate that many teens think that it’s a completely safe alternative to smoking cigarettes. Further, they have little idea what they are inhaling and many believe that they are not smoking. You can vape a product with or without nicotine.

Nicotine-we know that nicotine is addictive and vaping over a long period of time can lead to nicotine addiction.

Nicotine-free e-cigs-even without the delivery of nicotine, studies have shown that the chemicals found in e-cigarette liquid, flavorings and aerosols are unsafe. The particles released by the vapor contain “varying amounts of toxic chemicals, which have been linked to cancer, as well as respiratory (popcorn lung), and heart disease.”

There is also concern that vaping is the gateway to harder drug use. Additional research is needed to ascertain the safety or lack thereof of the chemicals inhaled during vaping.

It is, however, safe to say, that NOT vaping is better for you than vaping. It MAY (not clear yet and depending on whether you are using nicotine-free e-cigs) be marginally better than smoking conventional cigarettes, but it is NOT better than not smoking at all.

Why do the kids love it?

Kids love vaping because it's fun, tasty, easy to conceal and their friends are doing it. There are a multitude of flavors to indulge in and they can do vape tricks with the vapor (YouTube has a plethora of “how to” videos). A starter pack is relatively affordable and easy to get.

Regulation

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, under FDA regulations designed to protect the health of young Americans, minors can no longer buy e-cigarettes in stores or online.

Furthermore, the FDA now regulates the manufacture, import, packaging, labeling, advertising, promotion, sale, and distribution of e-cigarettes.

Dripping

Dripping is relatively new delivery system. It delivers a stronger hit, denser smoke and a more intense taste. Dripping is manually dropping e-cigarette liquid directly onto the hot coils of the vaping device.

Juuling

The Juul is just another type of vape pen in the form of a device that resembles a thumb drive that has in recent years become popular among younger kids because of its diminutive size and its pod system which make it easy to use.

In a recent Boston Globe article called [Juuling, “The Most Widespread Phenomenon You’ve Never Heard of”](#) and referred to it as, “a new front...in the never-ending game in cat and mouse between teenagers and adults.”

Young kids can easily get their hands on a Juul even though the website says that its products are for those 21 and older.

You can find much more information on vaping at:

Office of the U.S. Surgeon General <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/getthefacts.html>

The National Institute on Drug Abuse <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/electronic-cigarettes-e-cigarettes>

The Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm655051a2.htm>

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse <https://www.centeronaddiction.org/e-cigarettes>

The New York Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/14/health/teen-drug-smoking.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>

The Cut <https://www.thecut.com/2016/07/teens-are-vaping-just-like-teens-used-to-smoke.html>