

How can I help my teen quit vaping?

April 11 2023, by Michelle Jongenelis



Credit: Kindel Media/Pexels

You're driving your teen home from school when they open up to you about their vaping. What started off as an occasional puff of an e-cigarette has turned into something more serious.

"I was curious and just wanted to try it," they say. "All my [friends](#) were doing it and I wanted to do it too."

But now they are vaping more often and getting anxious when they can't access their vape. They want to quit but they aren't sure how.

Here are some practical tips to help your teen stop vaping.

I don't want to lecture. But what can I do?

You've seen [the news](#) and you know e-cigarettes [are harmful](#).

You might want to reprimand your child, or say "If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you do it?" But you know criticism and [lecturing don't work](#). So, what do you do?

First, acknowledge it's a great sign your teen wants to quit and is asking for help. We know motivation is critical to behavior change.

But if you're a parent of a teen who isn't ready to try quitting, you need to work on boosting their motivation to quit first.

Boost their motivation to quit

Talk with your teen about their vaping. Ask them what led to them wanting to quit and their reasons for wanting to give up. You can both use those reasons to help motivate quitting.

Use that knowledge to balance the benefits of quitting with the costs of not quitting. You can do this using [a practical exercise](#).

Discuss potential barriers that might get in the way of quitting. What is your teen worried will happen if they try to quit? Have they been using vaping to relax and are worried they will become more anxious? Are they worried about losing friends? Do they think they won't be able to quit?

Once you have an idea of the costs and benefits your child perceives,

you'll be in a better position to help them. For example, if they have been using vapes to relax, help them find other ways of reducing stress.

It might also help to tap into their values and use these to highlight that their vaping isn't aligned with who they want to be.

For example, if they are skipping class to vape but are usually a diligent student, discuss this [discrepancy](#) and the longer-term impact of their dependence (for example, not getting into uni).

Set a goal

Once your [child](#) is motivated, it's time to set a goal to quit. Work with your teen to develop a SMART goal that is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, with a **T**imeframe.

That goal might be to quit vaping by a certain date. But your teen may need to set smaller goals first. This might mean "This week, I will only vape on Monday, Wednesday and Friday."

Once achieved, these goals can be made more challenging until gradually, your teen has succeeded in quitting vaping.

Make sure you reward your teen or they reward themselves for achieving their goals, even the small ones.

Next, if your teen has been using nicotine vapes—and many vapes [contain nicotine](#) even if they are not labeled as such—they may be addicted.

Contact the Quitline (details below) or see your GP to discuss support for your teen. They may need extra help weaning off e-cigarettes. A nicotine tapering plan may help.

How to handle the setbacks

Your teen will likely have some trouble quitting. Remember those barriers from earlier? Create coping plans. What will your teen do if they are feeling stressed and want to reach for their vape? What will your teen do if they are at a party and are offered a puff?

These strategies may help your teen:

- keeping busy by doing puzzles, drawing, or playing games on the phone
- changing locations. Encourage your teen to get out and about. They can go to the gym, outside for a walk, or head to the footy
- reminding your teen about the reasons they want to quit and the costs of not quitting
- helping them practice saying "no" to a vape
- having snacks or gum they can grab when they have the urge to vape.

Show compassion

There are many reasons people vape. Among them is a vaping industry, [with deep pockets](#), that's expert at manipulating young people to start and continue [vaping](#).

So be compassionate and try not to judge your [teen](#). Lecturing, criticizing and being punitive won't help them quit. Position yourself as someone they can rely on.

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