An interactive text-message support program can help teenagers quit vaping, a groundbreaking new clinical trial finds.
Teens who subscribed to the anonymous program, called This Is Quitting, were 35% more likely to report not vaping nicotine by the end of a seven-month study, researchers reported Aug 7 in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

This is the first clinical trial testing the effectiveness of a quit vaping program among teens, researchers said.

"Until today, we haven't had data to tell us what works," said lead researcher Amanda Graham, chief health officer at Truth Initiative, an anti-tobacco nonprofit.

"This study is a critical breakthrough that demonstrates the power of a relatively simple technology in changing behavior," Graham added in a Truth Initiative news release. "Text messages serve as powerful reminders of an initial commitment to quit and can deliver proven behavior change support right to a young person's phone."

Young people need the help. In 2023, more than 2.1 million teens reported that they currently vape, including nearly 5% of middle school students and 10% of high school students, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Interest in quitting is also high, with more than two-thirds (67%) of 15- to 24-year-old vapers considering quitting as a 2023 New Year's resolution, according to a Truth Initiative survey.

This Is Quitting was launched in 2019 by the Truth Initiative. More than 750,000 young people have since enrolled in the text program from across the United States.

To join the automated program, teens and young adults can text DITCHVAPE to 88709.
The first message in response says, "Ready to quit? Text the date you want to quit for daily tips a few weeks before and after your quit date."

Teens who don't set a quit date receive four weeks of messages focused on building their coping skills and confidence, researchers said.

Those who do set a quit date receive support messages six weeks before and eight weeks after that date. The messages convey the risks of vaping, benefits of quitting, exercises to build coping skills, encouragement and support.

Teens also can ask for immediate help by texting keywords such as TIPS, FEELS and STRESS.

"It's normal to feel like quitting is hard, even if it's something you really want to do," one example text reads.

"You GOT this," reads another. "You may want to avoid people, places or things that make you want to use your vape today [if that's possible]. Text COPE or STRESS if you need."

"Drinking something cold—water, sports drink, iced tea, milk—can help when a craving pops up. You can always reply COPE," a third reads.

"Leah says, 'Keep your hands busy. Stress balls, binder clips, anything to keep a vape out of your hands!' Quitting can feel awkward, I get it. Find something to play with!" another says.

For the clinical trial, more than 1,500 teens who texted the This Is Quitting program randomly either started receiving support texts or were placed on a waitlist that served as a control group.

Nearly nine out of 10 (87%) of the teens had tried to quit in the past.
year, and more than half (53%) had made three or more attempts to quit, researchers said.

Three out of four (76%) said they vape within 30 minutes of waking, and nearly all (94%) felt somewhat or very addicted to vaping, the study found.

The study ran for seven months, during which all the teens responded to monthly texts assessing their success at quitting.

"Checking in: Have you cut down how much you vape nicotine in the past 2 weeks?" read one assessment text, while another said, "How's the quit going? When was the last time you vaped nicotine, even a puff of someone else's?"

Teens also filled out more detailed questionnaires at one and seven months, to provide more insight into how they responded to the program.

By the end, nearly 39% of the group that received the support texts had successfully remained vape-free, compared with 28% of the waitlisted control group. This quit rate exceeds those found in most clinical trials assessing quit programs for teen smokers, the researchers noted.

"We also did not see evidence that teens who quit vaping transitioned to smoking," Graham said, an important finding given that many are concerned that teens who quit vaping will take up cigarettes to feed their nicotine habit.

"Even though This is Quitting does not explicitly address smoking, it was effective in reducing dual use [smoking and vaping] and keeping teens in this study from starting to smoke," Graham added.

"Text messaging is a scalable and cost-efficient approach to delivering
vaping cessation treatment," the researchers wrote.


The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [resources to help young people quit vaping](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/special-topics/youth-tobacco/index.htm).