Tips for talking to youth about vaping

By Kori Anderson

Over the past several years, vaping has become increasingly popular among teens. Many believe it's harmless or safer than smoking, but the long-term effects are mostly unknown. Most vaping products contain nicotine, a highly addictive stimulant that is linked to higher rates of anxiety and depression, and disruptions in brain development among teens. Dangerous chemicals like formaldehyde and heavy metals like lead have also been found in these products.

As a parent, the role you play in shaping your child's perception of vaping is crucial. The best approach is to communicate openly and with understanding. Here are some tips to help guide those conversations.

Start early and keep talking. Kids are exposed to vaping and nicotine products at earlier ages than ever before. Rather than waiting until a problem arises, start the conversation early and have open and honest conversations about vaping and the impacts it can have. Quick, frequent conversations are much more effective than one big sit-down conversation. As your child grows up, keep the conversation going; The tobacco industry is continuously evolving and targeting the next generation of tobacco users.

Listen as much as you talk. Your child may already have had experiences with vaping. Ask open-ended questions like "Why do you think kids your age might be interested in trying vaping?" to start a conversation instead of a lecture. Use their answers to guide the conversation. If your child admits to trying vaping, remain calm and thank them for their honesty. Discuss ways you can support them in quitting vaping.

Share the facts. Many students don't know or fully understand the risks of vaping. Ask your child questions like "Do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?" to learn their perspective and fill in the gaps as needed.

Make it relevant. Every child is unique, and every conversation should be tailored to your child. If your child enjoys sports and being active, discuss how vaping can impact their lung function and athletic performance. If your child is trying to save up money for a car or college, discuss how being addicted to vaping can quickly become an expensive habit.

Be a role model. Children pay attention to the habits of those around them. If you do use tobacco or nicotine products, be open and honest about the health impacts, the difficulty of quitting, and why you want to quit. If you don't use tobacco or nicotine products, explain why you have chosen to stay tobacco-free.

Offer help and support. If your child is already vaping, focus on solutions rather than punishment. Work together to explore resources that can help them quit vaping and find alternatives to use.

Talking about vaping doesn't have to be intimidating. By starting early, listening closely and sharing relevant facts, you can help shape your child's choices. If your teen needs support in quitting, visit mylifemyquit.com or text "Start My Quit" to 36072 today.

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