

Talking to your teen about vaping

A conversation guide for parents



Ready to have the talk?

This guide can help you have a meaningful, non-threatening conversation with your teen about vaping. You won't find a set of scripted questions – we don't want to put words in your mouth. Instead, we'll share:



Conversation starters based on your teen's vaping behaviour.



Insights from our research about what your teen might be thinking and feeling, and what you can say to help.

These insights are based on our recent survey interviews and in-depth conversations with teens across Australia. Through our research, we've developed guidance to help parents better understand what their teens think and how they feel about vaping.

Before you get started, you should note this guidance isn't based solely on age. It's also based on your teens' motivations and attitudes towards vaping, as well as their current behaviours.

How to use this guide?

Plan the conversation in two parts. Use Part One to determine where your teen is at with vaping and Part Two to identify the group that best describes your teen right now and the most relevant tips to use. You might want to pause after Part One based on how the conversation went and re-visit it later with Part Two. Or, if you feel confident, you can jump straight into Part Two. Only you will know the best approach, and it depends on how your teen responds. Remember that where your teen is at with vaping might change over time. Revisit this guide whenever you need.

Our research tells us that a parent's opinion really matters to teens. Some teens don't vape because they don't want to disappoint their parents. Letting them know that you think vaping is a poor decision can be enough to deter many teens from ever trying.

It helps if your views about vaping are informed, based on facts, and in a relaxed and non-confrontational way.

[**Go to Part One**](#)[**Go to Part Two**](#)

PART ONE:

WHERE'S YOUR TEEN AT WITH VAPING?

One in three teenagers have tried vaping, and about one in five are currently vaping. So even if you don't think your teen is vaping, be prepared for them to admit having tried it.

Get ready to listen and talk without judgement. Be curious and interested in their thoughts and feelings. Because the safer your teen feels, the better your conversation will go and the more helpful you can be.

How to start the conversation

Start with a light touch and be curious about their world, knowing you have all the facts in your back pocket. The three question threads below should be enough to start talking about vaping, without your teen feeling interrogated or judged.

- How much vaping do you see in your friend circles or at school? (Don't ask who or where – they might get defensive about their friends.)
- Do you think vaping is as common as social media or the media portrays it to be?
- Is vaping something you have to go out of your way to find or avoid? Is that hard/easy?

Whether you use one or all of these questions, try to phrase them in way that requires more than a simple 'yes' or 'no' response. You can always follow up with 'how come?' or 'why?' to learn more.

Pick the right time to talk

For example, when you see someone vaping while you're driving or when there's something about vaping in the media. If your teen is busy or distracted it's probably not the right time to start a conversation.

What did you learn?

1. Your teen isn't into vaping, it's not on their radar or they're anti-vaping. They might have tried it in the past and decided that it's not for them. Move forward with the conversation tips for [1 Teen 1](#).
2. Your teen's friends vape, or they might've been offered to try one, see how curious they are about vaping by exploring these prompts:
 - Is vaping something they're curious about?
 - What do they wish they knew about vapes/vaping?
 - What (if anything) do they feel they're missing out on by not vaping?
 - What would they do if someone offered to share their vape with them?

If your teen is curious about vaping, has been offered to try a vape or feels like they're missing out on something, then your teen needs a different conversation. Follow the tips for [2 Teen 2](#).

3. You suspect your teen is vaping frequently or every now and then. Follow the conversation prompts and tips for [3 Teen 3](#) or [4 Teen 4](#), depending on whether or not they're addicted to vaping or want help to stop.

Worried about starting the conversation?

Quitline counsellors can guide you with expert advice. Contact them on 13 7848 Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm. Head to their website for all the ways you can get in touch.

If Part One goes badly, your teen shuts down or won't open up:

Let them know that there are others that can support them such as Quitline, a local GP or school wellness team. For more head to www.vapingfacts.org.au.

PART TWO: WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR TEEN RIGHT NOW?

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Teen 1 Your teen doesn't vape and might even be anti-vaping. They might have tried it in the past and decided that it's not for them. |
| 2 | Teen 2 You don't think your teen has tried vaping yet, but they're curious about it or might've been offered to try it. |
| 3 | Teen 3 Your teen's experimenting with vaping, either regularly or every now and then. They think they have it under control and won't get addicted. |
| 4 | Teen 4 Your teen thinks they're addicted, and they want help to stop. They may have tried to give up before and feel like they've failed, continuing to vape because it's too hard to stop. |



Teen 1



Your teen doesn't vape and might even be anti-vaping. They might have tried it in the past and decided that it's not for them.

Teens who aren't interested in vaping are probably more aware of the health risks and consequences. While they're around people vaping at school and in social situations, they're not curious about it and will try to avoid these situations.

You don't need to convince them of the risks, but you can reinforce the negative impact and support their decision not to vape – noting this decision can change as their social circles change.

Navigating the conversation

- Reinforce your approval of their decision not to vape.
- Explore how much your teen knows about vaping harms and risks. Ask them if they have questions and fill in any gaps for them.
- If your teen admits to trying vaping, respond without judgement and refocus the conversation to reinforce the negative impacts they already understand.
- Help them deal with or support a friend who vapes.

Facts to know

1. Using nicotine vapes is likely to lead to addiction. Many teens regret starting to vape due to the unexpected slippery slope to addiction.
 2. We have no way of knowing how much nicotine a disposable vape contains. Scientific testing shows that vapes are falsely labelled or not labelled at all with their nicotine content.
 3. Vapes contain up to 200 dangerous chemicals, such as poisons found in weed killer and paint stripper, that are inhaled deep into the lungs.
 4. By not vaping, your teen is keeping themselves fit and healthy, and protecting their lungs, brain, and mental health.
 5. Vaping wastes a lot of money – and many teens agree. A disposable vape can cost up to \$40 and can last a few days or up to a month.
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More information for you and your teen

Nicotine and mental health:

- [The impact of vaping on adolescent mental health](#)
- [3 ways vaping affects mental health](#)

Nicotine addiction and withdrawal:

- [Quick facts on the risks of e-cigarettes for kids, teens, and young adults](#)
 - [Vaping addiction and nicotine withdrawal](#)
 - [Vaping withdrawal in teens](#)
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[Go to Part One](#)

[Teen 2](#)

[Teen 3](#)

[Teen 4](#)



You don't think your teen has tried vaping yet, but they're curious about it or have opportunities to try it. They may not know what to do if offered to share a vape.

Many teens in this group will have friends who vape, making them more vulnerable to social pressure. They understand the health risks and fear how loved ones might react to them vaping. This means that your opinion on vaping is very important to their behaviour and your approval can positively reinforce the benefits of not vaping.

Navigating the conversation

- Reinforce your approval of their decision not to vape.
- Address their curiosity about the benefits of vaping with facts, not fear.
- As most teens are very anti-smoking, remind them that vapes have similar harmful health impacts as cigarettes.
- Let them know that many teenagers who vape regret having started and say the initial fun of vaping turned into addiction far quicker than expected.
- If your teen is open, ask them about how they have managed to avoid using vapes when offered. Discuss what has worked and what are some situations where it's been hard or embarrassing.
- Your teen could have been given a hard time about not vaping. If so, it's helpful to have some 'invented reasons' for them to give such as 'not while I'm training for X'; 'my coach will kill me', 'I've tried that flavour and I hate it', 'I've got asthma', or 'I'm on medication and can't have nicotine'.

- Help them work through the fear of losing friends by reinforcing that friendships are based on more than just vaping.
 - Reinforce that nicotine is a short-term fix and once they're using it regularly, a nicotine addiction is highly likely. Explain the science behind nicotine withdrawals and cravings and share the below tips with your teen.
 - If your teen mentions their friends vape to cope with stress or feelings of sadness or to escape, then talk to them about healthier ways to deal with these negative feelings.
 - Encourage your teen to use some of the helpful tips and ideas below to manage their mental health.
 - Demonise vapes as a product, not the people who vape. Teens are likely to disengage if they feel like you're judging their friend's choice to vape.
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Facts to know

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2. We have no way of knowing how much nicotine a disposable vape contains. Scientific testing shows that vapes are falsely labelled or not labelled at all with their nicotine content.
3. Vapes contain up to 200 toxic chemicals including formaldehyde, nicotine and heavy metals. These chemicals are known to cause cancer and brain damage.
4. Not vaping is the best way for your teen to stay fit and healthy, and avoid lung damage, brain damage and poor mental health.
5. Vaping wastes a lot of money – and many teens agree. A disposable vape can cost up to \$40 and can last a few days or up to a month.
6. Your teen is in the majority – only 1 in 5 teens vape. But to help maintain this, they should spend time with friends who also don't vape.

More information for you and your teen

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- [Vaping withdrawal in teens](#)

Mental health coping skills and tips:

- [Helping young people to quit vaping](#)
- [Teach your teenager coping skills for wellbeing](#)
- [Learn skills for tough times](#)

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[Teen 1](#)

[Teen 3](#)

[Teen 4](#)



They're experimenting with vaping. Think they have it under control. And believe they won't get addicted.

It's understandable to be worried about your teen vaping, try to remain calm. From their perspective, vaping is a normal and cool thing to do. They love trying the 'fun' flavours and aren't too worried about the risks to their health.

Is your teen a 'light' or 'social' user? They'll probably think they have their vaping under control and believe they can stop before it becomes too serious. This is a great opportunity to reinforce the risks of vaping.

If they vape occasionally, they probably don't see themselves as a vaper. The below points can help you navigate the conversation to help them acknowledge their habit.

Navigating the conversation

- Emphasise that health experts say there's no safe way to vape.
- Frame the conversation around how you feel about vaping without personalising it. But if they're ready to talk about their vape use, you can get personal.
- Point out that many teens regret starting to vape due to the unexpected slippery slope to addiction.

- Ask your teen to think about how often they vape and if they feel comfortable with that amount. You can end the conversation here until they're ready to talk again.
 - Remind them that even a small amount of vaping can cause damage to their lungs.
 - Unpack the social drivers of their vape use. Get them to explain what they're scared of missing out on. Help them work through the fear of losing friends by reinforcing that friendships are based on more than just vaping.
 - Reinforce the fact that one disposable vape can be equivalent to 50 cigarettes. Many teens don't think vapes are as addictive as cigarettes.
 - Reinforce that nicotine is a short-term fix and once they're using it regularly, a nicotine addiction is highly likely. Explain the science behind nicotine withdrawals and cravings and share the below tips with your teen.
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Things to look out for

- If your teen vapes for fun with friends, encourage them to think of healthier ways to have fun together.
- If you think your teen is vaping to help manage anxiety, stress or feelings of sadness, acknowledge these triggers with care. It's great that your teen has opened up. Show your support and suggest different, sustainable ways to manage their mental health. This is a great opportunity to reinforce the negative impact vaping and nicotine has on mental health.
- If your teen owns or has owned their own vape, their vape use can escalate, and they risk addiction.

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 3. Vapes contain up to 200 toxic chemicals including formaldehyde, nicotine and heavy metals. These chemicals are known to cause cancer and brain damage.
 4. Not vaping is the best way for your teen to stay fit and healthy, and avoid lung damage, brain damage and poor mental health.
 5. Vaping wastes a lot of money – and many teens agree. A disposable vape can cost up to \$40 and can last a few days or up to a month.
 6. Your teen is in the minority– only 1 in 5 teens vape. But to help maintain this, they should spend time with friends who also don't vape.
 7. One disposable vape can be equivalent to 50 cigarettes. Many teens don't think vapes are as addictive as cigarettes.
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More information for you and your teen

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Mental health coping skills and tips:

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[Teen 1](#)

[Teen 2](#)

[Teen 4](#)



They're addicted and want help to stop. Many have tried to give up before but failed. Now they may feel defeated and believe it's too hard to stop.

They need your support and empathy. In most cases, these teens started vaping with no intention of it becoming a habit. Encouraging them and supporting their journey is essential to helping them quit.

Navigating the conversation

- Emphasise that health experts say there's no safe way to vape.
- If they say they've tried to cut down or stop before, ask them what they did, what made it hard, and what might make it easier.
- Don't challenge their feelings of resignation towards vaping. This is a common reaction, and they might believe 'quitting is impossible'. Let them know there are helpful resources for teens who want to quit vaping, and put these within their reach – [like Quitline](#).
- Remind them that it can take multiple times to quit for good – it's important for them to gain perspective.
- Explain how nicotine addiction works in the body and how to recognise the signs of addiction (see resources below).

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Quitline is here to help

You can talk to a Quitline counsellor about any concerns and get advice on what you can do as a parent or carer, or how to start a conversation with your teen.

How to contact Quitline:

- Call 13 7848 Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm
- Text 'call back' to 0482 090 634
- [Start a Webchat](#)
- Message us on Facebook Messenger: @quitvic or WhatsApp: +61 385 832 920
- [Request a call back](#)

Go to Part One

Teen 1

Teen 2

Teen 3



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