

Top 10 Questions and Answers about Vaping and Juuling for Parents:

1. What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of using an electronic device to inhale or smoke vaporized liquid. The devices vary in shape and size, and they can resemble traditional cigarettes or cigars, pens or pencils, tape measures, Fitbits, and USB flash drives. The most popular of these devices are designed to resemble sleek tech pieces. The early vaping devices—and some continuing models—emit large clouds of scented vapor and are easily detectable. But newer, sleeker models manufactured by the Juul company emit smaller puffs of vapor and are more easily concealed.

2. What is Juuling?

Juuling is vaping. The word “Juul” is the registered trademark name of a company that manufactures “e-cigarettes,” or “electronic cigarettes.” These products were initially developed to help adult smokers quit smoking in the same way that the nicotine “patch,” nicotine gums, nicotine lozenges, nicotine inhalers, nicotine nasal sprays, prescription drugs like Bupropion (Zyban)* and Varenicline (Chantix), and mobile apps like Quitter’s Circle and SmokeFreeTXT were developed to help adult smokers quit smoking.

**Bupropion (Zyban) was initially developed as an antidepressant, and found to aid in smoking cessation treatment, so it is now prescribed for both conditions.*

3. When did vaping start?

The first patent for e-cigarettes was granted in 2003 to Chinese pharmacist and inventor Hon Lik. His intention was to decrease the numbers of smokers—including himself—in China. Pax Labs in the U.S. introduced its Juul device in 2015. Juul Labs is a spin-off company from Pax Labs, and became an independent company in 2017.

4. Why are teens vaping in epidemic proportions?

The use of bright imagery, youthful models, catchy music, and celebrity endorsements in Juul’s print, online, and broadcast media ads, plus its fruity vaping flavors and sweet scents have prompted several FDA (Food and Drug Administration) investigations into whether Juul was purposely marketing its products to minors. Teens sharing photos and videos of vaping products and/or of themselves vaping on social media is said to have given rise to vaping as a trend. All of this, plus the misconception that vaping is safe and not as damaging as conventional (tobacco) cigarettes may have kickstarted the current vaping epidemic in middle and high schools across the country.

5. What’s in the vaping juice?

The liquid “pods” that fill the Juul device contain nicotine and/or nicotine salts, artificial chemical flavorings, and humectants like propylene glycol or glycerine, which create an aerosol when exposed to heat. Each liquid “pod” of vaping liquid contains as much nicotine as a pack of 20 conventional (tobacco) cigarettes.

6. Is vaping dangerous or addictive?

There is a mistaken perception that e-cigarettes are safer than conventional (tobacco cigarettes.) However, e-cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance. In teens—and younger children—nicotine has a negative effect on the functioning of cell receptors in the brain, and can lead to stronger addictions in a shorter amount of time. It can also lead to a vulnerability to other addictive substances. According to the Center for Disease Control, the nicotine present in cigarettes and e-cigarettes can negatively impact brain development and cause both cognitive and behavioral damage. The chemistry and artificial flavorings in the vaping liquid may also cause reactions such as allergies, rashes, mood swings, headaches, and inability to focus.

7. How do I know if my child is vaping? What are the signs?

Vaping is *hygroscopic* in nature, which means that it causes a drying of the skin of the nose, mouth, and throat, and eventually a drying of facial skin. So **nosebleeds, severely chapped lips, excessive thirst, and severely dry skin on cheeks, foreheads, noses and chins** can be signs that a teen is vaping regularly. The large amount of nicotine present in vaping liquid is a stimulant and has been linked to anxiety. This, coupled with the caffeinated drinks that teens favor—such as colas or coffees—can cause side effects such as **dramatic mood swings, nervousness, and feelings of stress and overwhelm.**

Alternatively, teens may **refrain from drinking caffeinated drinks** in order to prevent the vaping side effects which would be aggravated and increased by caffeine usage. Lastly, the chemicals and particulate matter of vaping can cause **inflammation in the lungs**, which can lead to a host of respiratory health concerns such as bronchitis, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and pneumonia.

8. Are there federal or state laws against vaping?

In the United States, it is against the law for any vaping devices, equipment, refills, and other paraphernalia to be sold to anyone under the age of 18. Some states, like California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Oregon, have changed the legal tobacco products buying age to 21.

9. What can schools do to discourage minors from vaping?

PAUSD believes in raising awareness of public health issues through education and communication. Vaping is seen as a long-term challenge that requires continued long-term policies, practices, and solutions. According to the Palo Alto Weekly, this includes “having student-leaders speak out, providing feedback to the administration (including directly from students who vape), posting educational signs on campus, and having assemblies.” It also includes parent education opportunities, peer-to-peer outreach, and trainings for administrators, staff, teachers, coaches, and Wellness Center personnel. The more our community is educated about the behaviors, equipment, and effects of vaping, the more effective we will be in minimizing and eventually eradicating this unhealthy practice from our schools and community.

10. What can parents do about minors vaping?

Be aware: Are there unfamiliar USBs or things that look like battery chargers in your home? Are you seeing extra cotton balls, little wires, “pods” or little containers for the vaping juices? Are there unfamiliar sweet odors, like scented candles?

Be honest: Is there a history of addiction in your family? If so, your teen may be at a higher risk for addictive behaviors, such as vaping. If you suspect that your teen is vaping, speak with your trusted school counselor, family therapist, and medical professional to form an early intervention team and plan. There are abundant resources in our community. Remember: you do not have to go through this alone.

Be proactive: speak with your teen about vaping. Discuss its mental, physical, and emotional health effects. Be concerned and supportive without being condemning and accusatory. Addictions can be cured, but it takes initiative, understanding, and cooperation among family members.

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