

Know the Risks: E-Cigarettes and Young People

About 4.9 million middle and high school students used tobacco products in 2018. This increase—driven by a surge in e-cigarette use—erased past progress in reducing youth tobacco product use, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

E-cigarettes are devices that heat a liquid into an aerosol that the user inhales. The liquid usually has nicotine and flavoring in it, and other additives.

The following questions and answers are shared in *Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents*. You can get credible information about e-cigarettes and young people at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov> .

“Why don’t you want me to use e-cigarettes?” Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body. Right now, your brain is still developing, which means you are more vulnerable to addiction. Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and using nicotine can change your brain to make you crave more nicotine. It can also affect your memory and concentration.

E-cigarettes contain chemicals that are harmful. When people use e-cigarettes, they breathe in tiny particles that can harm their lungs. The cloud that people exhale from e-cigarettes can expose you to chemicals that are not safe to breathe.

“What’s the big deal about nicotine?” Your brain is still developing until about age 25. The Surgeon General reported that nicotine is addictive and can harm your brain development. Using nicotine at your age may make it harder for you to concentrate, learn, or control your impulses. Nicotine can even train your brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs.

“Are e-cigarettes safer than conventional cigarettes?” Because your brain is still developing, scientific studies show that it isn’t safe for you to use any tobacco product that contains nicotine, including e-cigarettes. Whether you get nicotine from an e-cigarettes or a cigarette, it is still risky. Some e-cigarettes batteries have even exploded and hurt people.