**I keep hearing terms such as e-cigarette, vaping, JUUL… and I’ll admit it, I’m confused. What are all these things and what do they look like?**

* **E-cigarettes:** any vaping device. These devices look like cigarettes, pens, USB drives or even watches. (Yes! This is why it’s so scary. You may not realize your kid has a vaping device because it looks like a thumb drive.). E-cigarettes are also known as: e-vaporizers, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), e-cigs, e-hookahs, hookah pens, vapes, vape pens, mods and pods.
* **Vaping (JUULING):** the act of using an e-cigarette. It’s called “vaping” because the e-cigarette releases an aerosol of various chemicals, which appears as a vapor. Vaping with a JUUL is called JUULing.
* **Vape Juice (E-Liquid):** the liquid used in e-cigarettes. It usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and a solvent such as propylene glycol or glycerin. It’s usually fruit or candy-flavored, which is a big reason why kids are drawn to it.
* **JUUL:** a popular brand of e-cigarette that resembles a USB drive. This is the device largely responsible for creating the youth e-cigarette epidemic. There are now dozens of imitator products on the market delivering JUUL’s recipe for addiction in a variety of shapes, sizes and flavors. Many of these devices now come in disposable options, making them even easier for kids to use and hide.
* **Tanks:** Refillable devices that are sold empty and can be filled with vape juice.
* **Mods:** e-cigarette units that users assemble themselves so they can tweak the battery power, style, and size.
* **Pod:** vape juice goes in the pod and then snaps into the device. They either come pre-filled or refillable. These are the flavor cartridges that go into devices like JUUL.
* **Disposables:** a pre-filled device that’s ready to go right out of the package because it doesn’t require charging or filling, and it is thrown away after using. They come in a variety of flavors and are generally high in nicotine. Some brands include Puff Bar, Mojo, Sea Stick, Myle, and Posh.

**So how do I know if my kid is vaping?**

Here are some signs to keep an eye out for:

* Vaping equipment or related product packaging
* Unusual online purchases or packages
* The scent is faint, but you may catch a whiff of flavoring like bubble gum or chocolate cake
* Use of vaping lingo in text messages or on social media
* Stepping away or excusing themselves from things frequently
* Appearance and/or behavior changes
* Changes in attention, mood, and impulse control

**Wait a second. Where do kids even get these things? Aren’t there laws about it?**

Look around you. E-cigarettes are sold at convenience stores, gas stations, tobacco shops, vape shops, or online. While federal law now prohibits tobacco sales (including e-cigarette sales) to anyone under 21, not all retailers strictly enforce age restrictions. Online purchases are notoriously easy for determined kids to make, too. Kids could use prepaid credit cards, which can be purchased at local grocery stores, to make online e-cigarette purchases. Many kids even have a dealer (sometimes referred to as their “plug” or “connect”) in school that supplies these.

**Okay, but I’ve heard that e-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional cigarettes. Please tell me that’s true.**

The U.S. Surgeon General and other public health experts have made it absolutely clear: The use of e-cigarettes is unsafe for kids, teens and young adults – and even for adults who currently don’t use other tobacco products. E-cigarettes pose a number of health risks for young people:

* Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine – some deliver as much nicotine as a whole pack of cigarettes or more. Nicotine is very addictive and can harm development of the adolescent brain, which affects attention, memory and learning. Brain development continues into the mid-20s.
* Studies have found that young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to become smokers.
* The Surgeon General has also found that using nicotine during adolescences can increase risk of future addiction to other drugs.
* In addition to nicotine, e-cigarettes can also expose users to other harmful chemicals, like formaldehyde and lead.

In addition, because e-cigarettes have not been properly regulated, we simply don’t know what’s in many of these products or what their long-term health effects will be. You might have heard someone say that the flavor chemicals that e-cigarette manufacturers use are FDA-approved. Sure – to put in food! We don’t know the effects of heating those chemicals and inhaling them into your lungs over and over! Kids who use e-cigarettes are guinea pigs in a dangerous experiment!

Don’t forget that cigarettes are the most deadly legal product you can buy – they kill nearly a half a million people in this country each year. So saying a product might be safer than cigarettes doesn’t mean it is safe at all – especially not for kids!

**But… I thought e-cigarettes were supposed to help people quit smoking.**

A recent report from the U.S. Surgeon General found, “There is presently inadequate evidence to conclude that e-cigarettes, in general, increase smoking cessation.” Other public health authorities in the U.S. have reached similar conclusions. Currently, many smokers who use e-cigarettes also continue to smoke regular cigarettes so they are exposed to harmful chemicals in both.

Before an e-cigarette company can market their product as a way to help smokers quit, they must apply to the FDA and provide scientific evidence that the product is effective for smoking cessation. However, no manufacturer has done so. While there isn’t enough evidence that e-cigarettes help smokers quit, there is clear evidence that these products are addicting millions of kids with sweet flavors and massive doses of nicotine.

**It’s just that e-cigarettes don’t seem harmful. I mean, they come in flavors like birthday cake. How can something cake-flavored be harmful?**

You’ve gotten to the crux of the problem. Big Tobacco is hooking kids using fun flavors such as: chocolate donuts, cotton candy, gummy bear, mint and fruit loops, as well as enticing fruit flavors like strawberry, blueberry, and mango. Plus the colorful packaging makes them look like candy and other products kids like, making them seem as cute and harmless as a lollipop.

But they’re not.

Tobacco companies have been using flavored products to attract kids for decades (Remember, they need kids as “replacements” for the customers killed by their products.) Poke around and you’ll see plenty of examples of other flavored tobacco products, including little cigars, menthol cigarettes, and hookah.

**Why doesn’t the FDA just ban flavored e-cigarettes? I mean, haven’t they? I feel like I read something about it.**

They may one day, but we’re not holding our breath. The Trump Administration recently took some flavored products off the market – mostly ones the industry had already stopped selling in the U.S. anyway. But the new policy leaves more than 15,000 flavored products on the market. And it doesn’t do anything about some of the most popular products among teens, such as Puff Bar and Mojo disposable e-cigarettes that come in dozens of flavors and look just like JUUL, and refillable devices like Smok and Suorin that kids can fill with nicotine liquids in a variety of flavors and nicotine strengths.

**I’m convinced that this is a problem, but should we be calling this a youth e-cigarette “epidemic?”**

From 2017 to 2019, e-cigarette use more than doubled among high school students and tripled among middle school students. Over 5.3 million kids used e-cigarettes in 2019 – an increase of over 3 million in just 2 years! Most alarming – 1.6 million of these kids used e-cigarettes frequently (on 20 or more days per month), which is a strong sign of addiction. It’s no wonder the Surgeon General declared this crisis a youth “epidemic.”

You can read more about this [here](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what-we-do/industry-watch/e-cigarettes). And to think, this all happened as we were near close to having the first tobacco-free generation.

**I want to help fight this. What can I do?**

Thanks for joining the cause! There are several things you can do starting right now:

1. Join the fight to help stop the youth e-cigarette epidemic in its tracks.
2. Have a conversation with your kid(s) about vaping. It’s never too early to start. [Get tips here](https://fightflavoredecigs.org/tips-on-talking-to-your-kids/).
3. Educate other parents and youth about this epidemic. [Share graphics](https://fightflavoredecigs.org/how-to-end-this-youth-epidemic/) or educational videos on your social channels.
4. [Email or call your legislators](https://fightflavoredecigs.org/how-to-end-this-youth-epidemic#legislator) and let them know you want them to fight for our kids and end the sale of all flavored e-cigarettes.
5. Leverage your voice by submitting a letter to the editor on this in your local paper. Templates for this can be found [here](https://fightflavoredecigs.org/how-to-end-this-youth-epidemic#letters).
6. If you do not have time or do not feel comfortable doing the above, you can also [donate](https://fightflavoredecigs.org/donate) to help us in the fight to end the youth e-cigarette epidemic. Your money helps contribute to education and advocacy efforts across the country.