

Facilitation Guide for Educators Working with Youth

Common Myths about Vaping

You can help prevent and reduce the use of vaping products among youth. Below are some common myths that youth may have about using vapour products along with some facts to help engage them in meaningful discussion about the harmful effects of vaping.



Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling a vapour produced by a battery-operated device that uses e-liquid (also called e-juice). E-liquids are available in hundreds of fruit and candy flavours. They can also contain different levels of nicotine.

Vaping products have many names such as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), vape pens, mods, and electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). Vaping products are packaged and branded in a way that appeals to youth.

According to the *2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS)*, in the past year, e-cigarette use among Ottawa's youth has surpassed tobacco use. Twenty-three per cent of Ottawa high school students in grades 9-12 have used an electronic cigarette at least once compared to 19% that tried tobacco at least once¹.





Here are some myths youth might have on vaping:

Myth #1 *“Vaping isn’t bad for you.”*

FACT:

- There is broad scientific consensus that youth should not vape.
- Vaping products produce a vapour that can contain many chemicals with known toxicity. Vaping e-liquid nicotine can result in nicotine addictionⁱⁱ.
- Children and youth are vulnerable to the negative effects of e-liquid nicotine. Nicotine can alter brain development and can affect memory and concentration, which may predispose youth to other drug addictionsⁱⁱⁱ.
- Candy flavoured e-liquid can entice youth to try e-cigarettes.
- There is also evidence that e-cigarette use can increase the risk of smoking cigarettes among youth and young adults^{iv}.
- Device malfunctions have resulted in injuries such as burns.
- In Ottawa, almost half (48%) of the students in grades 9-12 believe that regular vaping presents only slight or no health risks^v.



Myth #2 *“Vaping is better than smoking cigarettes.”*

FACT:

- Compared to combustible cigarettes, e-cigarettes do produce less chemicals and at lower levels.
- Switching completely from smoking cigarettes to e-cigarettes will reduce an individual’s exposure to many toxic and cancer-causing chemicals.
- However, the long-term safety of inhaling the chemicals from vaping products is unknown. Vaping is not safe for youth.





Myth #3 *“Vaping will help me to quit smoking.”*

FACT:

- The evidence about e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid is limited. More research is needed on the effectiveness of vapour products as a tool to help youth quit smoking.
- To date, no vapour product has been licensed by Health Canada to treat nicotine dependence.
- Ottawa Public Health (OPH) recommends that people in search of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) should use products that have been proven safe and effective. These products include the nicotine inhaler, patch, lozenge and gum.
- OPH also recommends that youth talk with their health care professional or their school’s public health nurse for support and advice to quit smoking.



Myth #4 *“All my friends are vaping.”*

FACT:

- Although there has been a recent rise in vaping, the truth is not all youth are vaping. A recent survey showed that 5% of Ottawa youth in grades 7 to 12 are currently using vapes^{vi}.
- The three most common reasons that youth report trying vapour products include curiosity, flavoring/taste and low perceived harm.
- Vaping products are currently being marketed to young people. These products are prominently displayed in convenience stores and can easily be purchased on the internet.
- Vaping products are packaged and decorated in a way that is attractive to youth. They are also available in a variety of youth friendly flavours such as “Banana Cream”, “S’Mores” and “Sour Skittles”.
- Some e-liquid products even look like soda cans. For example, Chill e-liquid products.
- JUUL is a new product that looks like a USB flash drive. One nicotine e-liquid pod is equivalent to the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.



Myth #5 “I can use vapour products anywhere I want to.”

FACT:

- There are reports of youth vaping in schools as the vapour cannot be easily detected, does not set off fire alarms in schools, and is easier to conceal from adults and authorities
- Youth also report vaping cannabis for the same reasons.
- *Smoke-Free Ontario Act 2017* (SFOA) prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in all the same areas where tobacco smoking is already banned. This includes:
 - » anywhere on school property (indoors and outdoors) and within 20 metres from the perimeter of the schools grounds; and
 - » all enclosed public places and workplaces.
- It is also against the law to give or sell vapour products to youth under the age of 19 in Ontario. The fine for supplying a vapour product is \$490.
- The City of Ottawa *Parks and Facilities* By-law prohibits smoking tobacco and the use of vapour products on all municipal properties including: parks, playgrounds, sports fields, beaches, indoor and outdoor areas of municipal buildings.
- The fine for vaping in a prohibited area is \$305.

ⁱ Ontario Student Drug Use Health Survey. Ottawa Results. 2017.

ⁱⁱ The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM): The Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes: A Consensus Study Report of the NASEM. 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Canada (Vaping Webpage). Available from: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/vaping.html. Accessed: October 4, 2018.

^{iv} The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM): The Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes: A Consensus Study Report of the NASEM. 2018.

^v Ontario Student Drug Use Health Survey. Ottawa Results. 2017.

^{vi} Ontario Student Drug Use Health Survey. Ottawa Results. 2017.

