

# Middle School Conversation Guide



## QUICK FACTS:

- Many preteens think vaping is “just a phase.” However, the earlier kids start vaping, the more likely they are to be addicted in the future.
- A single vape can contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.

## PARENT POINTER:

More kids are struggling with mental health issues than ever before. Nicotine only makes those symptoms worse. Center your conversation around your preteen’s well-being to gain their trust and let them know you’re on the same team.

## Conversation Starters

### 1. “What do you know about vapes/dip/cigarettes/tobacco? Have you ever been around these products?”

- Open the conversation casually, allowing you to correct any misunderstandings. These questions also allow your preteen to open up about their experiences in a disarming way.

### 2. “Why do you think people use these products?”

- Preteens have likely seen friends, celebrities and social media influencers use different products. Instead of accusing their peers (which may cause your preteen to shut down), speak to the “why.” This can also influence your next question.

### 3. “Have you ever been tempted to smoke or vape?”

- Do not accuse your preteen of using these products; only ask about their curiosity. These products target kids with designs, flavors and promotions. If your preteen is honest about their temptations, address their concerns with honesty, openness and facts.

### 4. “Do you know what’s in vapes and other nicotine products?”

- A common misconception is that vapes just produce water vapor. The truth is that most vapes don’t contain any water at all. They are packed with harmful chemicals and heavy metals.

### 5. “Do you know how serious addiction is?”

- The tobacco industry wants your preteen to become a lifelong customer. Explain the severity of addiction to them as it applies to their lives — sports aspirations, goals, dreams and current interests can all be impacted by addiction.



## Be Prepared ...

### 1. For claims that vaping is “no big deal” or “not as bad as other drugs.”

- The flavors and designs of modern products make them seem harmless, but they are just as addictive as cigarettes and even hard drugs. Don’t be afraid of the comparison; instead, use it as an opportunity to talk about the health risks and complications associated with nicotine. These include trouble breathing, increased asthma attacks, mental health struggles and increased heart rate.

## 2. To talk about yourself.

- Using your own stories to relate to your preteen will build trust between you. Talk about your struggles and experiences in an age-appropriate way.

## 3. For your preteen to disengage.

- You remember what it was like to be in middle school. A conversation with a parent or guardian after a long day may be the last thing your preteen wants. Don't force it. Bring it up another time when the setting is a little better — just don't wait too long!

## 4. To learn your preteen is using a tobacco or nicotine product.

- Kids report vaping as young as 11, and many parents are in the dark about their child. Do not get angry or lash out. Start by thanking them for being honest and let them know you are ready to help them quit. Point them toward the [TSET Healthy Youth Initiative](#) for more resources.

## Remember:

- Keep the conversation going. Don't stop at one "big talk." Bring up tobacco whenever it feels natural to maintain open communication.
- Pull examples from current events. Discussing news stories or TV characters who use tobacco can make the conversation feel more natural and relevant.

