



WHY THIS MATTERS

Vaping refers to inhaling vapors instead of smoke to ingest a substance – usually cannabis or nicotine. Kids may try vaping because they are curious and want to experiment, or because they are stressed and don't know how to cope effectively. But youth are particularly at risk for addiction given the brain's ongoing development and the high potency found in vaping devices. Vaping can worsen anxiety, depression and sleep, and people who misuse substances – including cannabis and tobacco – have a higher risk for suicide.

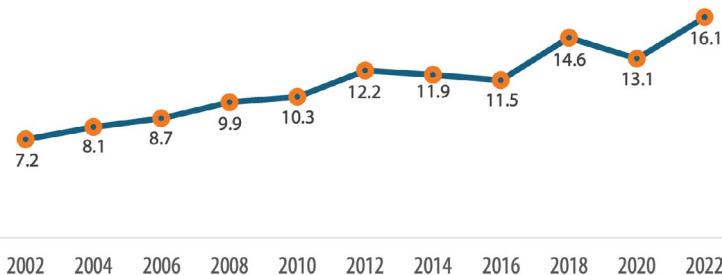
WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

As the adolescent brain is developing, it is particularly vulnerable to addiction. Research shows that nearly 90% of adults who smoke cigarettes on a daily basis started their habit before age 18.¹ That is, addiction almost always begins in the teen years.²

Electronic vapes have become very potent and use a rapid delivery system so they hook developing brains even faster than a traditional cigarette.³ When nicotine is absorbed by the body, it goes directly to the brain. A recent study revealed nicotine strength increased 294% between 2017 and 2022.⁴ One device could have as much nicotine as 25 packs of cigarettes.⁵

Additionally, the percentage of THC, the psychoactive component in cannabis, has increased dramatically. In cannabis seized and measured by the DEA, potency more than doubled between 2002 (7.2%) and 2022 (16.1%).⁶ The THC content when today's parents were young averaged around 4%, but now, vaping products can contain 90% THC.⁷ Higher concentrations are more likely to cause anxiety and paranoia.

**CANNABIS POTENCY (THC%)
AMONG SAMPLES SEIZED BY DEA**



Nearly all vapes feature enticing flavors,⁸ and nearly all youth who vape use flavored products like fruit, candy, and mint, which experts say encourages teens to try vaping.⁹ Research found that strong restrictions on flavored tobacco products lead to better outcomes for kids.¹⁰

KNOW the PRODUCTS!

New vaping devices — designed to be discreet, appealing, and easy to use — continually come onto the market, including those resembling smartphones and gaming devices.¹⁴

Vapes: Electronic smoking devices come in many shapes and sizes, often designed as everyday items like pens, lip gloss, or USB drives with refillable cartridges.

Digital Vapes: So-called “Smart Vapes” are products that come with Bluetooth capabilities that enable the vape to mimic a smartphone: a digital screen with calls, texts, social media notifications and pre-installed games.¹⁵

Pouches: While not a form of vaping, oral nicotine pouches (dissolvables) are just as dangerous. Pouches have had highest increase of use in recent years.

Learn more about the variety of products on [Tobacco is Changing](#) webpage.



Credit: [Tobacco is Changing](#)

continued

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WI?

- A third of Wisconsin high school students (34%) have **tried vaping**, and the number of those who **vape on a daily basis** has more than doubled.¹¹
- According to teens, the main factors driving kids to vape are they felt **anxious, stressed, or depressed**.¹²
- Among Wisconsin teens who vape, **84% want to quit or tried to quit**.¹³
- Wisconsin DHS funds several [youth cessation programs](#).



WHAT WE CAN DO

◉ PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

- Know the [basics](#) on youth vaping. Consider taking a [free on-demand video training](#) for parents.
- Talk to your kids openly about vaping and the [risks to their mental and physical health](#). Aim for short but frequent chats.
- Access [tips for talking](#) to kids and [vaping conversation guide](#). Discuss easy ways to [turn down a vape](#).
- Be aware of the [signs](#). Vaping is usually silent and often odorless, allowing teens to vape discreetly.

◉ SCHOOLS

- Educate [staff and students](#) about vaping; access [toolkits](#); focus on [prevention](#); and differentiate commercial tobacco vs sacred tobacco with Wisconsin's [FACT](#) resources.
- Teach stress management and provide time for students to practice healthy coping skills.
- Lead with youth voice by sharing [vaping stories](#) from Wisconsin youth.
- Consider joining the [Vape-Free Schools Initiative](#).
- Support students to quit vaping and develop healthy coping skills [rather than punishing](#) them.

◉ COMMUNITIES

- Cultivate vape-free spaces and events, both indoors and outdoors.
- [Educate](#) the [community](#) on the risks of [youth vaping](#).
- Share youth-specific resources on quitting like [Live Vape Free](#).

- Include youth voices in prevention efforts and policy discussions.
- Use zoning laws and retail checks to reduce access to those under 21.

◉ PROVIDERS

- Understand the [vaping landscape](#); access the [AAP Vaping Toolkit](#).
- Convey vaping's impact on brain development and youth health. Describe the [stress cycle](#) and how withdrawal symptoms can worsen stress and anxiety.
- Explain the physical and mental health benefits to quitting: 90% of youth who quit vaping reported less stress, anxiety, and depression.¹⁶
- Offer free youth-specific [resources](#) like [text](#) or [cell-based](#) services to help [kids quit](#).
- Access [resources](#) on prevention, cessation, policy, and protecting youth from tobacco and nicotine.

◉ POLICYMAKERS

- Increase [taxes on vaping products](#), including vapor liquids. Base taxes on price, not weight, to reduce youth use.
- Include e-cigarettes and cannabis in Wisconsin's smoke-free air policies.
- Raise Wisconsin's tobacco and vapor minimum sales age to 21 to reduce youth access.
- Enact restrictions on fruit, candy, and menthol flavors, which are [effective in lowering teen vaping](#).

Sources:

- ¹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. [Youth and Tobacco](#), 2024. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education/youth-and-tobacco#reference>.
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. [The Health Consequences of Smoking - 50 Years of Progress](#).
- ³ Masonbrink, et al. Trends in Daily Nicotine Vaping and Unsuccessful Quit Attempts in Youths. *JAMA Network Open*, 2025. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.41061.
- ⁴ Diaz et al. Tobacco Control, 2025. Bigger, stronger and cheaper: growth in e-cigarette market driven by disposable devices with more e-liquid, higher nicotine concentration and declining prices. doi: 10.1136/tc-2023-058033.
- ⁵ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [Anatomy of Addictive Technology: "Smart Vapes"](#), 2026.
- ⁶ National Institute on Drug Abuse. [Cannabis Potency Data](#), 2024.
- ⁷ Anne Arundel County Department of Health. Vaping: Get the Facts. Protect Your Future. <https://www.ahealth.org/dontvape>
- ⁸ CDC Foundation. [Data Snapshot: E-Cigarette Flavors](#), 2026.
- ⁹ U.S. Food & Drug Administration. [National Youth Tobacco Survey](#), 2024.
- ¹⁰ Seaman Jones et al. Stronger flavor policies, better outcomes for young people. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute Monographs*, 2025 doi: 10.1093/jncimonographs/lga019.

¹¹ Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023.

¹² Williams et al. [Wisconsin Adolescents' Attitudes, Beliefs, Motivations, and Behaviors Surrounding E-Cigarette Use and Cessation](#). *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 2025. Also see the Wisconsin Safe and Health Schools Center's [2024 Focus Groups on Vaping in Schools](#).

¹³ Williams and Kaye, [Vaping Cessation Methods Used by Adolescents](#). *JAMA Pediatrics*, 2025. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2025.1974

¹⁴ In May 2026, the [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#) reported there were more than 340 vaping devices on the states' required electronic vaping device directory.

¹⁵ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [Anatomy of Addictive Technology](#): "Smart Vapes," 2026.

¹⁶ Truth Initiative. [Colliding Crises: Youth Mental Health and Nicotine Use](#), 2021.



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