VAPING PREVENTION & EDUCATION

TIPS TO HELP TEENS STAY NICOTINE-FREE

HOLIDAYS ARE A TIME OF CHEER (AND SOMETIMES STRESS)

For many Americans, the holiday season is a time of celebration, rest, and good food. Vacations from school and work spent with family and friends are a mainstay. After a busy year, taking downtime to relax and reflect is important and well-deserved.

Sometimes the holidays also include stress and anxiety, which affect people for different reasons. If you are a teacher, coach, counselor, or parent of teens, you know they are not immune to stress at this time of year. The pressure to succeed, fit in among peers, or process life changes are just a few factors that can make an otherwise happy season feel overwhelming. For some teens, spending time with family can be as stressful as it is enjoyable.

HELP TEENS FOCUS ON HEALTH AND AVOID NICOTINE

The mix of highs and lows over the holidays is a good reason for teens to focus on their health. Eating healthy food, getting enough rest, and making time to exercise are three ways they can counter the challenges of the season and get ready for the new year.

Another excellent way for teens to focus on health is to stay nicotine-free during the holidays. Some teens cope with stressful times by using nicotine — but vaping or smoking does not make stress and anxiety go away.

NICOTINE IS HARMFUL TO YOUTH

Living nicotine-free is especially important for teens and adolescents. The 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that more than 2.1 million youth use e-cigarettes — also known as vapes. Many of these teens vape every day, and high rates of youth vaping suggest a strong dependence on nicotine.

To teens, vaping once in a while may seem like "no big deal," but vaping is not harmless. Vaping nicotine may negatively affect a teen's learning and memory by promoting addiction to nicotine. Teens can get addicted faster than adults because their brains are still developing.

5 TIPS TO HELP TEENS AVOID NICOTINE

Teens may find that they're more tempted to vape or smoke during the holidays. Below are some tips you can share with teens to help them live and stay nicotine-free:

1. **Focus on health.** Help teens use their holiday break to focus on eating well, getting exercise, and spending time with people who support them and their goals.
2. **Expect challenges and be prepared.** Stress, anxiety, and even boredom may create the urge to vape. Teens can learn their vaping triggers, and be ready to fight the craving.
3. **Manage stress in a healthy way.** Teens may want to reach for a vape or a cigarette when they feel stressed or anxious. However, they should know that this will not actually relieve stress and can make the stress they already feel worse. Staying calm by pausing and breathing deeply when feeling challenged may help some teens. Going for a hike outside or reaching out to a supportive friend or family member to talk may help, too. Teens ***can*** learn to manage stress in tough moments.
4. **Keep trying.** If teens slip and vape, urge them to keep working on living nicotine-free. Thinking about what caused the urge to vape may help prevent the next slip. If teens are worried that they've become addicted, it will help to learn the signs of vaping addiction and find out how to get help.
5. **Learn more about staying nicotine-free.** Check out the materials for students to learn the facts about vaping, and real-life stories to help teens understand the dangers of vaping nicotine. Visit Smokefree Teen, a website with information, tips, and resources to avoid nicotine and tobacco. The site includes sections called "Quit Vaping" and "Become Smokefree."

5 TIPS FOR ADULTS TO HELP TEENS STAY NICOTINE-FREE

Adults can also play a role in helping teens stay nicotine-free over the holidays—and all year long.

1. **Get the facts about vaping,** and then share what you learn with teens. Check out the Print & Download section of the resource center for fact sheets about youth vaping, videos with pediatricians, and other resources to help you learn how to start and revisit an open conversation with teens.
2. **Learn how to identify vapes and "stealth" e-cigarettes.** Teens may use vapes that look like other objects, such as smart watches. Or they may use disposable vapes. Find out how to spot these devices.

3. **Know the symptoms of nicotine addiction.** Common signs of vaping addiction include an inability to stop vaping, or feeling anxious or irritable due to cravings when ***not*** vaping. These may signal that a teen needs help.
4. **Model healthy habits.** Create tobacco-free environments. If ***you*** need help quitting, visit smokefree.gov.
5. **Be patient and understanding.** Teens who use nicotine need help from caring adults. Be open to their questions about vaping, and visit FDA's Tobacco Education Resource Library to find up-to-date resources for you to share with teens as you continue the conversation.

A HEALTHY START TO A NEW YEAR

We all hope our holiday season will be filled with good times and delicious food — without a side dish of stress. Whatever happens, aim to make the season healthier (and happier) by helping the teens in your life get a head start on being nicotine-free in the new year and beyond.