

## NICOTINE

It has been well documented through research and surveys that most tobacco smokers/users began using before they were of legal age.

That fact helped spur and advance youth targeted prevention and education efforts over the last 20 years. This has led to a steady decline, over the past two decades, in the overall use of tobacco (cigarette and chew) among youth.

Indeed, it appeared we had turned the corner on the use of tobacco/nicotine use among youth. Taste, smell, and health concerns were three of the main reasons youth gave for not using.

However, tobacco companies did not idly sit back. They took this important information and used it to develop a more desirable product aimed at youth as well as adults, e-cigarettes/vaping devices, with the Juul being one of the most popular devices youth sought out.

With vaping devices, there was minimal to no lingering smell on clothes, or in spaces where youth would use these products, such as cars, home or even at school. In addition, there were dozens, if not hundreds of kid-friendly fruity and sweet flavors, eliminating the bad taste smoking often left in the mouths of users. And as we know, these products were advertised as healthy alternatives to smoking cigarettes. No cancer-causing tar or secondhand smoke effects.

Subsequently, we found out there are some very real and serious health risks associated with vaping, such as popcorn lung, that can lead to significant health problems and/or even death.

Fortunately, efforts to address old and new health concerns related to nicotine use helped push the legal age of use of nicotine products from 18 to 21 years of age in December of 2019. And the banning of flavors in many vaping devices went into effect in February of 2020.

In the last two or three years, we have begun to see a decline in nicotine vaping use among youth. Unfortunately, though, there are new concerns about the loopholes tobacco companies are exploiting that allow the flavoring in certain nicotine vape devices.

In addition to the current vaping concerns, we are starting to see an increase in the use of nicotine pouches among youth. While pouches have been around for quite some time their popularity and use among youth and adults alike has grown. They seem to be the next big trend in nicotine use since vaping exploded.

Unlike vaping, these products are allowed to have all sorts of flavors that range from mint flavors, fruity flavors, or even coffee flavors. Several of these nicotine pouch brands are packaged to resemble breath mint containers.

ZYN, is one of the most popular brands but there are several brands. On!, VELO, ROUGE are also very popular brands. (Below are 2 nicotine pouch brands that resemble breath mint packaging)



And while we continue forward with prevention efforts, we must also focus on intervention as well.

What can we do to help a teen/adolescent that is addicted to nicotine quit?

First, be supportive, encouraging and understanding. Quitting nicotine is not easy. After all, studies show it is as addictive as heroin.

Here are some simple techniques that might be helpful to someone who is addicted to nicotine and wanting to quit:

- **Exercise...**moving around and getting physical exercise can release the same kind of chemicals that your brain is craving from nicotine. This can be as simple as taking a walk, going on a bike ride, playing catch, etc.
- **Small, Simple Distractions...**nicotine cravings tend to intensify and grow stronger the more a person focuses/thinks about using. Take your mind off the temptation through small tasks like drawing/doodling, writing/texting, playing a board or card game, or listening to music.
- **Identify triggers...** For instance, waking up and going to bed are common times for someone to use. Other common times people tend to use are just before or after eating as well as times when people are feeling stressed.

Listed below are some links that focus on helping teens quit nicotine/tobacco use:

- <https://teen.smokefree.gov/>
- <https://teen.smokefree.gov/quit-vaping>
- <https://truthinitiative.org/curriculum>

In addition to the resource links above, below are additional links to sources referenced for this article that contain more information for parents on teen nicotine use and prevention.

[https://scipnebraska.com/newsletters/current\\_newsletters/current-newsletters.html](https://scipnebraska.com/newsletters/current_newsletters/current-newsletters.html)

School Community Intervention and Prevention

September 2023

*SCIP is funded in part by: Lincoln Public Schools, United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County, Region V Systems, Nebraska DHHS: Division of Behavioral Health, Region 4 Behavioral Health System, and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare*

<https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/topic/emerging-tobacco-products>  
[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts/trends-in-tobacco-use-among-youth.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/trends-in-tobacco-use-among-youth.html)  
<https://drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/What-You-Need-to-Know-and-How-to-Talk-to-Your-Kids-About-Vaping-Guide-Partnership-for-Drug-Free-Kids.pdf>  
[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/youth/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/youth/index.htm)