



# Florida Health News

## Back To School Season Can Present A Time For Smart, Supportive Conversations On E-Cigarettes

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(NAPS)—Back to School presents parents and students with opportunities to have important discussions about life choices. One thing to connect on before the first bell rings is understanding and avoiding tobacco, including electronic cigarettes.

An increasing number of Florida school-aged children have either used an e-cigarette or know someone who does. While combustible cigarettes are almost entirely gone from our state's schools, e-cigarettes were by far the most-used tobacco product among teens in 2021. In 2021, 18.3% of Florida high school students reported current use of e-cigarettes, a 16.6% increase compared to 2017.

Unsure how to address tobacco with your child? Here are some tips:

**1. Study up.** Before you have the conversation, spend some time making sure you're aware of the most recent changes. Did you know the minimum smoking age is now 21 across Florida, or that some previously popular brands like JUUL are now less popular among teens and young adults?

**2. Start the conversation naturally.** Be patient and ready to listen, encourage open dialogue and avoid criticism. For example, if you and your teen see someone using an e-cigarette or you walk by an e-cigarette shop, try asking what they think about it and what they already know and believe.

**3. Address the problem straight on.** You can educate your kids about the dangers of tobacco use and change their minds. They will listen. Studies show that parents can significantly impact their children's behavior, including whether or not they use tobacco products.

**4. Become involved in your kids' lives and social schedules.** Young people whose friends use tobacco are more



**Parents can protect their kids from the dangers of tobacco use by following a few simple steps.**

likely to use tobacco themselves, to try to fit in. Meanwhile, kids who do well in school and participate in structured, extracurricular activities are less likely to be susceptible to smoking.

**5. Pay close attention to what your children bring home.** Some of the most popular e-cigarette devices look like flash drives, pens, and inhalers, which can be easily concealed. Some e-cigarettes require charging, so check what devices are being charged or look for unusual plugs. If you don't smell anything, don't assume they aren't using products with nicotine. E-cigarettes typically won't make clothes smell of tobacco.

**6. Team up.** Ask your healthcare provider or other trusted adults (such as teachers, coaches or counselors) to talk with your child about the risks of e-cigarettes.

To address teen e-cigarette use, Tobacco Free Florida offers Live Vape Free, a program featuring free tools and resources. Live Vape Free provides teens with text support, interactive content and one-on-one coach support to help

them quit e-cigarettes.

It's an easy-to-navigate learning experience that teaches teens the skills needed to quit. Once enrolled, participants receive texts containing relevant content to help them on their quit journey. Live Vape Free features content that:

- Educates teens on the keys to quitting nicotine.
- Motivates, inspires and enlightens users on the importance of staying nicotine-free.
- Helps teens find their "why" when quitting.
- Boosts overall confidence among teens looking to quit.

More information on that program is available at [www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/LiveVapeFree](http://www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/LiveVapeFree) or by texting VAPE-FREE to 873373.

Additional support, including free Quit Coach support and Web Quit, are also available depending on age.

Of course, in addition to being ready to discuss tobacco with your children, one of the most important things you can do is set the example by not smoking or using tobacco yourself.

Research shows that kids who have a parent who smokes are more likely to smoke and to be heavier smokers at young ages. But the good news is that when parents quit smoking, their kids become less likely to start. If you're a parent who is ready to quit smoking, Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services can help. More information is available at [www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com](http://www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com) or 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669).

Parents know this is a time for a lot of conversations that can mean a world of difference to the futures of their children. If you educate yourself, you can be there for your child and make smart decisions for years to come.