



Introduction to the Risks of E-cigarettes and Vaping: Digital Lesson Educator Guide

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | CORE PROGRAM BUNDLE

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Session 2: Making Our Own Choices

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- **Identify** the percentage of e-cigarette users in high school and middle school and describe nonsmokers as the majority.
- **Describe** the harmful consequences of e-cigarette use.
- **Identify** reasons why teens may begin using e-cigarettes.
- **Identify** positive alternatives to using e-cigarettes.
- **Develop, practice, and demonstrate** refusal skills and exit strategies.

Overview

After learning that using e-cigarettes is illegal and *not* a behavior that most students choose to do, students will learn and practice refusal skills and exit strategies to use if they are offered an e-cigarette. Students discuss why kids their age may be tempted to experiment with e-cigarettes and then list potential positive alternatives. For homework, students are sent home with an assignment to interview an adult/parent about peer pressure, tobacco, and more.

Content Areas

Health

Target Grade Level

Grade 5

Approximate Class Time

35–40 minutes

Materials

- Your school/district policy for e-cigarettes and other tobacco products
- Index cards or squares of paper, one per student
- **Adult Interview** student handout, one per student
- Ball to toss in classroom

Educator Prep

Before the session begins:

- Visit the [Public Health Law Center's](#) website to find the specific restrictions and age requirements for your state. Add this information to Slide 17.
- Find your school and regional smoking (or tobacco) policies regarding cigarettes and e-cigarettes as well as any potential consequences. Add this information to Slide 18.

Key Terms

- **Nicotine:** A highly addictive drug found in tobacco.
- **Refusal skills:** Something to help you say “no” to someone offering you an e-cigarette in a creative way.
- **Exit strategy:** A thoughtful way to get out of an uncomfortable situation.

Slide 20 | Engage

- Engage students in the upcoming lesson by probing them to consider what they learned in the previous session about nicotine. Invite one or two students to share. If students are reluctant to volunteer, provide the following:
 - Almost all e-cigarettes contain nicotine.
 - Nicotine is addictive.
 - Addiction is especially harmful to the growing brains of young people.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **E-cigarettes contain nicotine, just like cigarettes do, which means they are addictive.**
- **Addiction is particularly harmful to young people, because it can change their brain chemistry.**

Slide 21 | Explain

- Explain to students that all states have restrictions for minors around the sale, purchase, or use of e-cigarettes or nicotine containers. Most states require you to be at least 18, although a number of states have increased the age to 21 in order to purchase.
- Click to reveal your state's laws.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **All states have restrictions for minors around the sale, purchase, or use of e-cigarettes or nicotine containers.**

Slide 22 | Explain, Cont.

- Share your school/district policy about cigarettes and e-cigarettes as well as any consequences the students might incur if they use e-cigarettes on school property.

Slide 23 | Explain, Cont.

- Ask students to guess the following on scratch paper: “*What percentage of high school students have used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days?*” and “*What percentage of middle school students have used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days?*”. Then prompt students to share some of their guesses.
- Click to reveal the actual numbers to students: 20.8% of high schoolers and 4.9% of middle schools reported using an e-cigarette in the previous 30 days.
- Reinforce to students that this means that very few high schoolers and even fewer middle school students choose to use e-cigarettes.
- Ask students if they are surprised by these numbers and why they might have guessed they were higher. Help them realize that things like advertising, news coverage, social media, and word of mouth or gossip may cause them to think that more students are doing it than actually are.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **The vast majority of high-schoolers and middle-schoolers choose not to use e-cigarettes.**
- **Sometimes we have misperceptions about the number of people who use e-cigarettes because of media and people who talk about it a lot.**

Slide 24 | Explore

- Instruct students to get into their groups from the previous session. Distribute an index card or square of paper to each student.
- Ask students to independently record responses to the following question on the front side of their index card: **“Why might young people experiment with e-cigarettes?”** On the back side, they should record responses to the following question:
 - *“What are some positive things young people can do instead of using e-cigarettes?”*

Slide 25 | Explore, Cont.

- Instruct one student from each group to collect the index cards and read the reasons for use and positive alternatives aloud to their group. Each group will then share 1 or 2 of the reasons for use and positive alternatives with the whole class.
- As students share, record their responses in the table.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **The use of any form of tobacco by adolescents is considered unsafe.**
- **There are many potential positive and healthy alternatives to using e-cigarettes.**

Slide 26 | Explain

- Explain that refusal skills are strategies to help people avoid participating in high-risk behaviors.
- Exit strategies are pre-planned ways of creatively removing yourself from a pressure situation that is likely to become difficult or unpleasant.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **A refusal skill is something that can help you say “No” in a creative way.**
- **An exit strategy is a thoughtful way to get out of an uncomfortable situation.**

Slide 27 | Explore

- Ask: What are some situations and places in which you may be offered an e-cigarette? For example, in the school bathroom, locker room, in class, at a friend’s house. Instruct students to record those situations and places on the board or scratch paper.
- Click once and instruct students to brainstorm with their group to come up with smart exit strategies/refusals to use when offered an e-cigarette. They can record the strategies on scratch paper.
- Review the strategies and responses your students developed. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers for this, but each student should feel comfortable saying “No” and removing themselves from an uncomfortable or difficult situation.

Slide 28 | Explore, Cont.

- Show examples of some successful exit strategies and emphasize ones that did not come up in the class discussion.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- **Some examples of successful exit strategies are simply saying “No,” hanging out with non-smoking/non-vaping friends, suggesting something else to do, giving a reason you don’t want to use e-cigarettes, or using some humor.**

Slide 29 | Explore, Cont.

- Instruct students to stand up and form a large circle around the perimeter of the room.
- Give a student a small, soft ball. That student should give an exit strategy or refusal skill before tossing the ball gently to another student, who will in turn give another exit strategy or refusal skill.
- This repeats until all students have had the opportunity to participate. Then, instruct students to return to their seats.

Slide 30 | Extend

- Distribute one **Adult Interview** student handout to each student.
- Explain to students that they will be talking to their parents (or another adult) about their e-cigarette knowledge and asking them questions about their own experiences.
- Instruct the students to introduce the topic to their parents: “We talked about e-cigarettes today and I’d like you to know what we learned.”
- They should bring the completed worksheet to the next class session.

Slide 31 | Wrap Up

Reinforce students’ learning by reviewing the following points:

- All states have restrictions around the sale, purchase, or use of e-cigarettes or nicotine pods or cartridges to a minor.
- Approximately 2 out of 5 kids don’t think regular use of e-cigarettes is harmful, and over 50% of kids don’t think there is nicotine in flavored e-cigarettes.¹⁵
- Most young people do not use e-cigarettes; only 20.9% of high-schoolers and 4.9% of middle-schoolers do.
- Sharing information is a better strategy than being mean or putting someone down because of their e-cigarette use.

¹⁵ Wang, T. W., Trivers, K. F., Marynak, K. L., O’Brien, E. K., Persoskie, A., Liu, S. T., & King, B. A. (2018). Harm perceptions of intermittent tobacco product use among US youth, 2016. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 62*(6), 750-753.

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