

## Dear School Nurses and Health Teachers,

Have you noticed that even as the number of tweens and teens who smoke cigarettes is decreasing, the number who use e-cigarettes is on the rise?<sup>1</sup> You're not imagining it. Many kids think that vape pens, e-cigs, and e-hookahs are harmless. With these products, "an atomizer heats a solution of liquid, flavorings, and nicotine that creates a mist that is inhaled. Experts warn that nicotine in any form is even more dangerous for children and teenagers than it is for adults."<sup>1</sup>

It's time to act. That's why the National Association of School Nurses, in cooperation with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, has developed *Is It Worth It?*—a complete set of standards-based materials you can use to help students learn about the health dangers of all nicotine and tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, vape pens, and e-hookahs. The materials include background information, three student activities, a wall poster, parent information letter, and a toolkit for students to take further action on their own.

In addition to implementing these materials, there are other steps you can take to help kids be tobacco-free. For example, encourage them to get involved with tobacco-free activities in your community. They might assist with compliance checks at local retailers (in conjunction with the health department), and/or join local tobacco-free coalitions. Let kids (and parents) know that this sort of community involvement looks great on school applications and resumes.

We encourage you to share this valuable resource with other school nurses and health educators. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make as many copies as necessary for educational purposes. Please let us know your opinion of this program by returning the enclosed reply card or by responding at [ymiclassroom.com/feedback-is-it-worth-it](http://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-is-it-worth-it). Your comments help us provide free educational programs that make a real difference in students' lives.

Sincerely,



Dominic Kinsley, Ph.D  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired

Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com).

# Is It Worth It?

## Target Audience

This program is designed for use with middle school students in grades 6-8, along with their parents, guardians, and other adult mentors.

## Program Objectives

- Help students and parents understand the health dangers of e-cigarettes, vape pens, e-hookahs, and other nicotine and tobacco products.
- Provide tools to help students stay or become tobacco- and nicotine-free.
- Encourage students to advocate on behalf of their health and the health of their friends and peers.

## Components

- This nurse and educator guide
- Three reproducible activity sheets for students
- Downloadable activities in Spanish
- A colorful wall poster
- A downloadable student toolkit featuring social media to promote learning
- A downloadable parent/guardian letter in both English and Spanish
- All downloadable materials are available at [ymiclassroom.com/is-it-worth-it](http://ymiclassroom.com/is-it-worth-it)

## Standards

This program aligns to National Health Education Standards, National Standards for Science in Personal and Social Perspectives, and Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, History/Social Sciences, and Science. See complete details at [ymiclassroom.com/isitworthit](http://ymiclassroom.com/isitworthit).

## How to Use This Program

Display the poster in your classroom, office, or school hallway, and ask students to consider or discuss what it means. Administer activities with students, individually or in groups, and provide them with the student toolkit for independent/self-guided work. Send the parent/guardian Letter home via email, or post it on your class or school webpage. Encourage older students to work with younger students, in school or at home, to share information and come up with ways to prevent and combat the use of nicotine and tobacco. Share the "Is It Worth It?" materials with other nurses, teachers, and mentors who focus on health and health-related issues, including leaders of after-school, youth group, and faith-based programs.

## Activity 1 But Everyone Does It...

In this activity, review the timeline with students and, based on the information, ask them to discuss the effects of pro-tobacco groups, anti-tobacco groups, government, peers, and others on public and personal perceptions of nicotine and tobacco. Afterward, ask students to debate whether e-cigarettes, vape pens, and e-hookahs are health hazards. Encourage them to conduct research before debating.

**Extension:** Ask students to continue the timeline demonstrating how nicotine products like e-cigarettes might be represented and understood in the future.

## Activity 2: Find the Real Message

Ask students to analyze the advertisement for e-cigarettes and think about/discuss its messages. Be sure to point out the types of teens used in the ad, how their selection is supposed to influence readers, and how the product title, "Spotlight," suggests the product will have positive benefits on anyone who uses it. Have students consider why the advertisers might have chosen active teens (to show that there are no health ramifications), and ask them if an image of healthy teen dancers mimics anything appealing in today's popular culture. Ask: Why would the advertisers feature a group of active teens doing things together, instead of showing one teen? Then discuss how the ad might be altered to tell the true story: How an actual teenage smoker looks (stained teeth, etc.), acts (less active, or uncomfortable when more active), and feels (in terms of health: coughing, wheezing, etc.). What sorts of social and financial difficulties might a teenage smoker face (being ostracized by others, spending too much money to support their habit, etc.), and how could that be represented?

**Extension:** After researching e-cigarette and smoking statistics, ask students to create their own advertisements, PSAs, and/or tweets. Direct them to the student toolkit for additional details and remind them to post content only with a parent or guardian's permission.

## Activity 3: Defend Yourself

Have students read excerpts from the provided article about electronic cigarettes and answer multiple choice questions. (Answers: 1-d, 2-b, 3-d, 4-c.) Then assign them to groups so they can create and perform a skit demonstrating a tween or teen facing peer pressure to try e-cigarettes. After each skit, ask student observers to discuss when and how the peer pressure occurred: Who initiated it? What was said or done to pressure the student? How might they have felt if they were in that situation? Also, have students come up with ways the student being pressured might have responded to avoid trying e-cigarettes: by talking about health concerns, walking away, changing the subject, bringing humor to the situation, turning the tables, and so on. Encourage students to think about how a parent or guardian might help in that situation: for example, they could say they would get punished if their parent/guardian found out they were smoking. Or, they might text a parent/guardian, ask them to call, and use the call as a reason to leave or go home.

**Extension:** Have students write and read aloud their own short article about e-cigarettes, vape pens, and e-hookahs based on their research.

## Resources

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
[www.tobaccofreekids.org/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/)  
"DrugFacts: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products"  
<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/news/e-cigarette-use-triples-among-middle-and-high-school-students>  
Americans for Non-Smokers Rights  
[www.no-smoke.org](http://www.no-smoke.org)  
Be Tobacco-Free: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
<http://betobaccofree.hhs.gov/>

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<sup>1</sup> E-Cigarette Use Triples Among Middle and High School Students, Stacey Simon, April 17, 2015. American Cancer Society. Accessed February 7, 2016. <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/news/e-cigarette-use-triples-among-middle-and-high-school-students>



Is It  
Worth  
It?

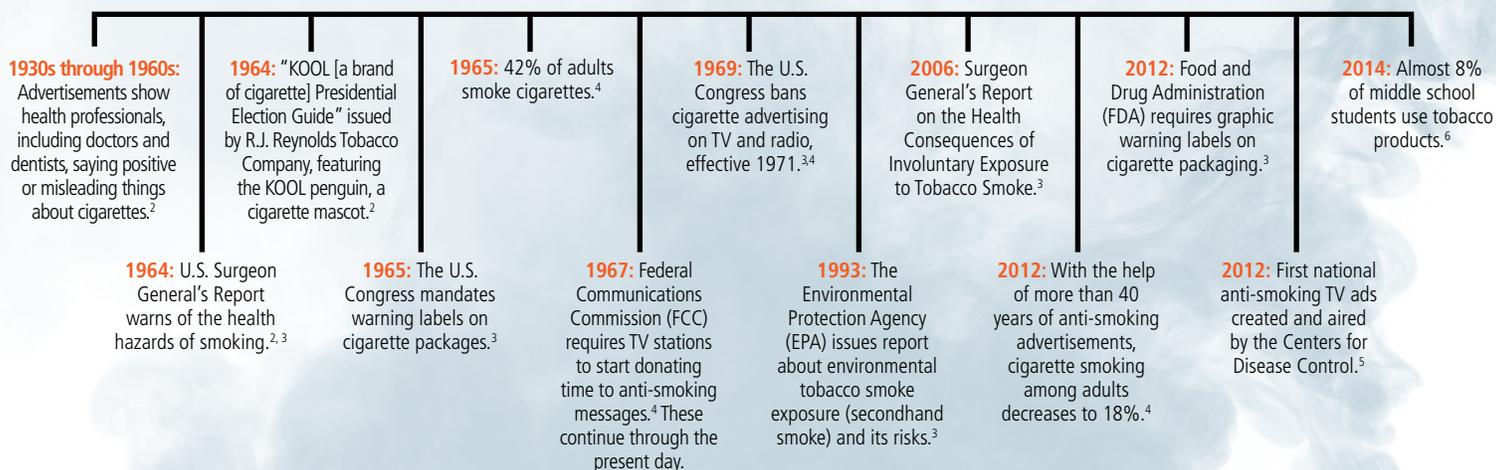
# But Everyone Does It...

Have you ever heard someone say, “If your friend jumped off a bridge, would you jump too?” What does it mean? Choosing to do what others do isn’t always best, or safest. You might have heard that e-cigs and vaping are safe. Here’s what the experts have to say about that:

*[A] lot of safety questions haven’t been answered yet. Even if it turns out that they’re otherwise low-risk, e-cigarettes [including e-hookahs and vape pens] can hook kids on nicotine. They can still create a lifelong nicotine addiction...<sup>1</sup>*

*If smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today’s Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness. That’s about 1 of every 13 Americans aged 17 years or younger alive today.<sup>6</sup>*

## Take a look at this timeline.



Notice the changing ways that pro-tobacco, anti-tobacco, and government groups present cigarettes over time—and how the public is affected. Want to find out more about public perceptions of tobacco use? Talk to a parent, guardian, or grandparent and ask them what they remember.

## PROVE IT!

Now it’s time to learn some more about the subject and debate the use of e-cigarettes and tobacco. Here’s how to get started:

- Organize two debate teams: it’s okay/it’s not okay.
- With your team or on your own, jot down reasons you think smoking tobacco or using e-cigarettes would be okay, then write reasons you think it would be not okay/unsafe.

- Feel free to use the facts on this worksheet and the sources cited at the bottom of the sheet to gather more information. Another great source: [tobaccofreekids.org](http://tobaccofreekids.org)
- Now, begin your debate! At the end, take a vote to decide who won? Why?

<sup>1</sup> “Child and Teen Tobacco Use.” American Cancer Society. Last revised March 6, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> “Smoke gets in your eyes: 20th century tobacco advertisements,” Jeffrey K. Stine, March 7, 2014. O Say Can You See? Stories from the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian. Accessed February 6, 2016. <http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/2014/03/smoke-gets-in-your-eyes-20th-century-tobacco-advertisements.html>

<sup>3</sup> “Selected Milestones in Tobacco Research, Promotion, and Surveillance.” NHIS - Adult Tobacco Use Information: Historical Context. CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Page last updated: December 9, 2011. Page accessed February 6, 2016. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/tobacco/tobacco\\_history.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/tobacco/tobacco_history.htm)

<sup>4</sup> CNN Health: The evolution of anti-smoking campaigns. Accessed February 6, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2015/04/02/anti-smoking-campaigns-history-orig.cnn>

<sup>5</sup> “Tobacco: First National Anti-Smoking TV Ads Help 200,000 Smokers to Quit,” Alice Park, September 9, 2013. *Time*. Accessed February 6, 2016. <http://healthland.time.com/2013/09/09/first-national-anti-smoking-tv-ads-help-200000-smokers-to-quit/>

<sup>6</sup> “Smoking and Tobacco Use: Youth and Tobacco Use.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Page last updated: October 14, 2015. Accessed February 6, 2016. [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/youth\\_data/tobacco\\_use/index.htm#estimates](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm#estimates)



# Find the Real Message

What does this advertisement say to you?

## Think about or discuss:

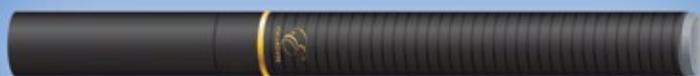
- What is this advertisement leaving out that's important?
- What does it suggest versus what you know?
- Can you think of other ads like this that might be misleading or inaccurate?
- What is the danger of an advertisement like this?

"The number of people ill with smoking-caused disease on any given day: 16 million"<sup>1</sup>

"People who die each year from cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke: approx. 480,000+"<sup>2</sup>



## IT'S YOUR TIME TO SHINE



SPOTLIGHT | e-cigs

## WANT TO KNOW MORE? GO TO:

### Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

- [www.tobaccofreekids.org/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/)
- [www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/fact\\_sheets/toll/products/ecigarettes/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/toll/products/ecigarettes/)

### Americans for Non-Smokers Rights

- [www.no-smoke.org](http://www.no-smoke.org)
- [www.no-smoke.org/document.php?id=804](http://www.no-smoke.org/document.php?id=804)

### Be Tobacco Free: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- <http://betobaccofree.hhs.gov/>

<sup>1</sup> "The Daily Toll of Tobacco Use in the U.S.A.," Laura Bach, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, October 7, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2016. <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0300.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Toll of Tobacco in the United States of America," Laura Bach, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, February 1, 2016. Accessed February 12, 2016. <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0072.pdf>



# Defend Yourself

Read these excerpts from *DrugFacts: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products*.<sup>1</sup>

## Electronic Cigarettes

### Are They Safe?

Although e-cigarette vapor does not contain the tar currently responsible for most lung cancer and other lung diseases, it has been shown to contain known carcinogens and toxic chemicals (such as formaldehyde and acetaldehyde), as well as potentially toxic metal nanoparticles from the vaporizing mechanism.

[T]he long-term health consequence of e-cigarette use remains unknown.<sup>1</sup>

## Can They Help People Quit Smoking Traditional Cigarettes?

Studies of the effectiveness of e-cigarettes have not shown they help with smoking cessation. It has also been suggested that they could perpetuate the nicotine addiction and actually interfere with quitting.

In fact, early evidence suggests that e-cigarette use may not only put users at risk for nicotine addiction but also serve as an introduction to nicotine that could lead to use of regular cigarettes and other tobacco products. A recent study showed that students who have used e-cigarettes by the time they start 9th grade are more likely than others to start smoking traditional cigarettes and other smokable tobacco products within the next year.<sup>1</sup>

## NOW, ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

- 1) According to the excerpts, e-cigarettes:
  - a. introduce users to nicotine
  - b. put users at risk for nicotine addiction
  - c. may interfere with quitting smoking
  - d. all of the above
- 2) Based on context, the word “cessation” probably means:
  - a. a starting of some action
  - b. a stopping of some action
  - c. smoking
  - d. tobacco
- 3) E-cigarettes contain:
  - a. carcinogens (cancer-causing agents)
  - b. formaldehyde
  - c. nicotine
  - d. all of the above
- 4) According to a recent study, students who’ve used e-cigarettes by the time they start 9th grade are more likely to do which of the following within the next year?
  - a. become addicted to nicotine
  - b. get lung cancer
  - c. start smoking traditional cigarettes and other smokable tobacco products
  - d. understand the long-term health consequences

Finally, work together in pairs or small groups to write and perform a skit about a tween or teen being pressured by peers to try e-cigarettes. Use the information below for ideas.

“[C]igarette smoking results in...about 1 in every 5 U.S. deaths [each year]—and an additional 16 million people [each year] suffer with a serious illness caused by smoking.”<sup>1</sup>

“Similar to...cocaine and heroin, nicotine increases levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which affects the brain pathways that control reward and pleasure. For many tobacco users, long-term brain changes induced by continued nicotine exposure result in addiction—a condition of compulsive drug seeking and use, even in the face of negative consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “DrugFacts: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products,” revised August 2015. NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse – The Science of Drug Abuse and Addiction. Accessed February 6, 2016. <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/cigarettes-other-tobacco-products>