The medical community is clear: It is unsafe for adolescents to vape. In response to the epidemic of youth vaping, this guide has been developed by the UMass Medical School Center for Tobacco Treatment Research and Training with input from a working group of Massachusetts school nurses.

Vaping is inhaling and exhaling the aerosol produced by an e-cigarette. Common vapes include JUUL, Blu, Rip-Tide, Alto, Suorin, fruity Stik, and Puff Bar.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

This guide contains information relevant to the quitting process that can aid discussions between a school nurse or counselor and their students. It can also be used as a supplement to the texting program, This Is Quitting powered by truth®, as well as other cessation programs. It includes a tool to assess dependence, suggested scripts to use when talking with youth about vaping, and additional resources for school nurses and counselors about nicotine dependence treatment.

ASSESSING NICOTINE DEPENDENCE:

The tool below, The Hooked on Nicotine Checklist (HONC), identifies youth for whom help and encouragement with cessation would be appropriate. More recently the HONC has been used to measure nicotine dependence among youth who vape.1 In treatment, the HONC can be used to signal the loss of autonomy, the onset of dependence, and the degree of dependence.2

The HONC is scored by tallying the number of yes responses, from 0-10. Any score greater than zero indicates that the person has lost some degree of autonomy over vaping. This indicates that nicotine addiction has begun.

The Hooked on Nicotine Checklist (HONC)3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Have you tried to stop vaping but couldn’t?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you vape now because it is really hard to quit?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have you ever felt like you were addicted to vaping?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you ever have strong cravings to vape?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have you ever felt like you really needed to vape?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Is it hard to keep from vaping in places where you’re not supposed to? (School?)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you tried to stop vaping, or when you haven’t vaped for a while...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did you find it hard to concentrate because you couldn’t vape?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did you feel more irritable because you couldn’t vape?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Did you feel a strong need or urge to vape?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Did you feel nervous, restless, or anxious because you couldn’t vape?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADD THE YES RESPONSES = TOTAL SCORE:

Reference:

Use the italicized scripts below as a guide when talking with youth about vaping. Asking open-ended questions rather than questions with yes/no responses to engage the student in a dialog can help you learn more about their vaping patterns.

**DISCUSSING DEPENDENCE:**

After completing the HONC, review answers with the student and discuss their “Yes” responses.

*Let’s see how you scored. Any “Yes” response indicates you might be having a hard time controlling your vaping and that you are dependent on nicotine.*

Point to an example where the student answered “yes” and explain how that may be a sign of dependence.

- **Most vapes have high amounts of nicotine, an addictive chemical that can be hard to quit.** Some vape manufacturers add nicotine salts which are more easily absorbed by your body, causing you to take in higher amounts of nicotine. What are your thoughts about this?

- **If it’s been a while since you have vaped, many young people find they begin to have bad cravings or feel unwell which is called “withdrawal.”** What have you noticed for yourself?

- **Young people who vape are four times more likely to go on to smoke cigarettes, even if they think they never will.** What are your thoughts about this?

**OFFERING ASSISTANCE TO QUIT:**

Quitting vapes or other tobacco products can be hard. Would you like some help with quitting?

- **If YES:** While it’s true that some youth quit vaping on their own, it can be even more helpful to use a program especially designed to help youth. You can sign up even if you’re not sure you want to quit right now.

  1. **This is Quitting powered by truth®** is a free, confidential, and automated texting program with information, tips, and support to help you quit. Once you sign up you’ll receive daily text messages about quitting or cutting down, including messages from other youth who have quit.

  2. **My Life, My Quit™** is a free, confidential program with coaches trained to help young people by phone or text. When you sign up, you can choose options that include phone chats with a coach or online coaching.

- **Would you be interested in starting one of these programs? I can help you get started with either one.**

  Help student sign up for the desired program, if student is willing.

  - **For This is Quitting powered by truth®, text VapeFreeMass to 88709.**
  - **For My Life, My Quit™, text Start My Quit to 36072, call 1-855-891-9989,** or visit mylifemyquit.com to sign up online or get more information about vaping.

- **What can I do to support you? I’m available if you would you like to talk again about vaping.**

  Provide the student with the Quitting Vaping: Information for Youth (TC3488) brochure or other resources related to vaping (see back page).

- **If NO: Would you be open to talking a little more about your vaping?**

  - **If YES: What questions do you have about your vaping?**

    - **We could also talk about what to do if you feel like vaping but can’t, or about the health effects of vaping.** Refer to topics on the next two pages.

  - **If NO: If you ever change your mind about quitting or cutting down, I’m available if you’d like to talk.**

    Provide student with the Thinking about Quitting Vaping (TC3484) card or other resources related to vaping (see back page).
This guide/section includes common topics to discuss when addressing nicotine dependence. Choose the topics based on a student’s interest or in response to a specific question. Each topic is designed to engage students in a brief discussion about their vaping habits. For any topic, prioritize the one or two most relevant points, especially if there is limited time with the student.

MANAGING CRAVINGS AND WITHDRAWAL:

When you quit vaping, your body craves nicotine and you may experience withdrawal symptoms, including cravings, feeling restless and jumpy, feeling irritable or sad, having trouble concentrating, or experiencing mood swings or fatigue. These withdrawal symptoms usually last for a few days to 1-2 weeks after you quit. After that, your body starts forgetting about nicotine and you begin to feel better.

- Which symptoms are you most concerned about during your quitting/cutting down?
- Let’s think of some ways to manage these withdrawal symptoms.

One of the best ways young people have found to handle withdrawal symptoms is to practice the 4Ds: delay, deep breathing, drink water, and do something else.

- **Delay** means to hold off on taking a hit until the urge passes, usually in a few minutes.
- **Deep breathing** helps deal with cravings and stress. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply.
- **Drink water.** Sip the water slowly and hold it in your mouth for a little while.
- **Do something else** to distract yourself. What can you do instead of vaping?

RECOGNIZING TRIGGERS:

Knowing why and when you vape can be helpful, because then you can prepare what to do instead of vaping. We call these situations or feelings “triggers,” because they trigger your urge to vape. When do you typically vape or have an urge to vape?

- Other prompts: Who are you with? What are you doing? What mood are you in?
- If student is having difficulty identifying triggers, walk through a typical school day and weekend day to help them identify when and where they tend to vape. (For example: Let’s think about how your day typically goes, and then we can figure out what your triggers might be).

Having a plan to address situations that cause triggers will help you deal with the urge to vape.

- What could you do instead of vaping during those times/activities? (For example, exercise, listen to music, call a friend, etc.)

One of the most common triggers is being with friends who also vape. Think about what it will be like if you are hanging out with friends who are vaping.

- What will your friends think of you if you are not vaping? How will you handle those situations?
- What can you say to friends who want you to continue vaping? (For example, “It lowers my performance in sports.” “My mom/dad/guardian will be upset with me.” “I don’t want to get in trouble/lose privileges.” “It’s all too risky for me.” “It’s not worth it to me.”)
HEALTH EFFECTS OF VAPING:

Nicotine can increase your heart rate, which you may notice if you play sports or are active. You may get tired more easily or not be able to run as fast.

What have you noticed for yourself?

High amounts of nicotine may make you feel irritable, sick to your stomach, or jittery. This is called “nicsick.” If it’s been a while since you have vaped, you may begin to feel unwell or have bad cravings to vape.

What have you experienced?

Nicotine can cause changes to your brain that make it harder to pay attention, or to control impulses or your moods.

What have you noticed for yourself?

The vapor that comes from vape isn’t water. It’s an aerosol that contains heavy metals, cancer-causing ingredients, and ultra-fine particles that can damage your lungs. Flavorings add other chemicals that may be approved for eating but not inhaling.

What have you been hearing about the damaging health effects of vaping?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL NURSES AND COUNSELORS:

- Complementary vaping cessation materials for youth can be found on the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse website at mass.gov/MAClearinghouse (search keyword tobacco). Free materials for parents about youth vaping are also available to order.
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s vaping campaign Toolkit for Schools is available at GetOutraged.org
- Supporting Youth who are Addicted to Nicotine: Advice for Pediatricians from the American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019 bit.ly/2WQifw2
- CDC: Lung Injury Associated with Vaping: bit.ly/2s5Hiz0

TRAINING PROGRAMS:

- UMass Medical School's Center for Tobacco Treatment Research and Training (CTTRT) offers online and in-person trainings for school nurses and counselors who want to learn more about treating nicotine dependence. umassmed.edu/tobacco/training.
- Contact UMass CTTRT for more information on Calling it Quits: Vaping, a one-on-one vaping cessation program for youth administered by school nurses and other personnel (email cttrt@umassmed.edu). Online courses in Motivational Interviewing are also available. Visit umassmed.edu/cipc/motivational-interviewing/overview.

NOTE ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Vaping Cessation: A Guide for School Nurses and Counselors was adapted from a publication (Calling It Quits) supported by National Cancer Institute [NCI] grant 1R01CA114556 to the University of Massachusetts Medical School [L. Pbert, P.I.] in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of NCI.