

Children's Health



Connecting The Community To Fight An Epidemic

by Marcella Bianco

(NAPS)—According to recent research by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 2 million middle- and high-school students use e-cigarettes. With the study conducted fully during the COVID-19 pandemic, this places U.S. youth in a pandemic and an epidemic.

Nicotine hurts the developing brain and this addiction can lead to others. What's more, vaping increases a person's chance of experiencing complications from upper respiratory illnesses, and some researchers believe a relationship exists between vaping and serious respiratory impacts, such as those from COVID-19. While a network of solutions is required to overcome this epidemic, there are actions people can each take today.

Families play a critical role in influencing a child's decision-making. Parents and guardians can help keep their kids healthy by having thoughtful, factual conversations about the dangers of vaping. For assistance getting started, parents and guardians can turn to no-cost digital tools from Be Vape Free—a nationwide initiative, built around the evidence-based CATCH My Breath program, that provides standards-aligned e-cigarette prevention resources for educators teaching grades 5-12 and families. Be Vape Free was created in partnership with the CVS Health Foundation, CATCH Global Foundation, and Discovery Education.

The parent toolkit is designed to give parents, guardians, educators, and community members the opportunity to learn more about the vaping epidemic,



Too many kids take breath-taking risks by vaping—but they can be helped.

gauge a child's risk of trying e-cigarettes and find the best strategy to talk to kids about the dangers of e-cigarettes. Chock-full of facts and research, these resources have just about everything families need to empower students to live a healthy life. With the toolkit, families can answer key questions related to vaping including:

- What is vaping?
- Why do teens vape?
- What do vapes look like?
- What are in vapes?
- What are the effects of vaping?
- What are signs of vaping?

With this informational foundation, parents and guardians can connect with their kids to initiate conversations about the dangers of e-cigarettes based on facts. Together—one conversation, one day, and one student at a time—we can end the vaping epidemic by arming young people with the tools they need to make healthy, smart decisions, and impart lessons that last a lifetime.

• *Ms Bianco is the National Program Director for the CATCH My Breath youth e-cigarette prevention program. She has 18 years of experience working in tobacco prevention and control with government and non-profit organizations.*