

UNFILTERED:

THE TRUE COST OF NICOTINE

Local youth share how vaping and nicotine have impacted their lives.

HOW HAVE VAPING AND NICOTINE IMPACTED YOUR LIFE?

I have been vaping for 4 years & n
I am severely addicted.

MY AGE: 14



AT A GLANCE

Unfiltered: The True Cost of Nicotine is a compelling resource that highlights the extensive impact of vaping and nicotine on young lives.

Over **800 local youth** have shared their experiences anonymously through powerful testimonies, exposing how vaping has affected their health, friendships, experiences at school, and more.

It is up to us as parents and caregivers, educators, community leaders, local decision-makers, and Wisconsin policymakers to address youth vaping.



NICOTINE IS HARMFUL

Tobacco companies target youth through advertising, using bright colors, fruit and candy flavors, and developing products with screens and smart technology. Their goal is to attract today's youth to become tomorrow's lifelong customer.



CONCERNING CHEMICALS:

- Nicotine
- Formaldehyde
- Acrolein
- Lead
- Benzene
- Diacetyl
- Propylene glycol
- Vegetable glycerin

American Lung Association. (2024, December 17). *The impact of e-cigarettes on the lung*. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/e-cigarettes-vaping/impact-of-e-cigarettes-on-lung>.

NICOTINE AFFECTS YOUNG BRAINS:

Nicotine releases dopamine, creating a temporary feeling of pleasure. Over time, it disrupts brain development, affecting attention, learning, and memory. Other studies have shown that nicotine increases overall stress levels and worsens depression and anxiety. Nicotine also increases addiction risk, making it harder for teens to quit.

Truth Initiative. (2022, June 8). *Nicotine and the young brain*. Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/nicotine-and-young-brain>.

CURRENTLY AT OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS:

GEEK BAR PULSE \$5-15

Geek Bars are disposable, easy-to-use vapes that contain 50mg of nicotine each, while a traditional cigarette delivers about 1-2mg of nicotine.



VUSE \$15-20

Vuse vapes remain popular, designed with rechargeable batteries and refillable pods in various nicotine strengths.



SWFT \$5-15

SWFT rechargeable vapes are larger than Geek Bars and are designed to deliver a high puff count of 5000+ per device.



LOST MARY \$10-15

Vapes such as Lost Mary have become digitized containing 'puff count' incentives, touch screens, and others even have games.



RAZ \$15-30

There are several RAZ vapes, but the RAZ DC25000 offers 25,000 puffs per device and features a mega HD touchscreen that displays animations and includes a boost mode.



LOCAL DATA

Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey. (2023). Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs>.

The number of high school teens who reported using an ENDS in the past 30 days.

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) are electronic vapor products, including e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-hookahs, mods, and puff bars.

MARATHON COUNTY



PORTAGE COUNTY



WOOD COUNTY



WISCONSIN



LOCAL DATA

Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey. (2023). Retrieved March 10, 2025, from <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs>.

The number of high school teens who reported having ever tried vaping.

MARATHON COUNTY



PORTAGE COUNTY



WOOD COUNTY



WISCONSIN



HOW IS VAPING IMPACTING OUR YOUTH?

“There aren't many places I can be without finding someone addicted. School, work, any public place you can think of, someone's hooked on it. I've seen so many vapes and cigarettes, it doesn't surprise me anymore when someone has something. It's as if nobody knows how harmful they are, what sort of diseases they cause. Some will even act as if those who don't want nicotine are the odd ones, the weirdos for living clean, especially in the bathrooms. It's sad to see how casually people can use them, how casual it is to admit that you're an addict.”

MY AGE: 17

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Youth shared the physical health impacts of vaping on themselves, their families, and friends over **244** times.

“ Made me more tired and
It made my lung's weaker
It also got me in trouble a
cuple times and I can
run aslong by In the outta
breath ”

MY AGE: 14

“ Nic affected my life so much, I was 8
years old when I hit one, and my little brain saw smoke
and thought 'oh that's cool!' but little
did I know that it ^{would} ruined my life,
I couldn't play sports cuz of my
lungs, and I noticed that I was
sad, angry, and other emotions all cuz
nic. good thing I had a best friend
that cares about me and he took it and
broke it, I haven't vaped since
and you shouldn't either. ”

MY AGE: 12

“ Vaping and nicotine has impacted
my life ^{negatively}, because it reduced
my ability to play sports, outdoor
activities, and exercising. ”

MY AGE:

MENTAL HEALTH

Youth shared the mental health impacts of vaping on themselves, their families, and friends over **112** times.

“I Struggle with stress and started vaping to help with my stressors to the point that I could not have it with me and got caught at school so people started to judge me even after I quit and it was very isolating”

MY AGE: 14

“I know my sister's old friend that was also her roommate's vaped. Her roommate would always ask her to buy vapes when both of them weren't of age. My sister did try it out to see what it was like, and so vaping increased of how bad her panic attacks were.”

MY AGE: 12

“ I started using e-cigs in 8th grade only because others were and I wanted to look cool or fit in. Then I started relying on it when I got stressed and it got worse from there. The flavors sounded good and it was so easy to get like I got 2 vapes for a bag of chips. I relied on nicotine and it got pretty bad that I would need it or I begin to get shaky. I vaped from 8th grade to my sophomore year, I still vape once in a while but I don't rely on it as much. It impacted me because I still sometimes crave and I run to nicotine when times get tough. ”

MY AGE:

16

“ I found out that my sister and my cousin's are hanging out w/ people that are in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade that vape. The kids would get vapes from their siblings or steal them from their parents and sneak them into school. They would ask their teachers to go to the "bathroom" to vape. Another situation is that, some of my friends vape and I have seen the way it affects them. They would have moodswings, they sometimes can't focus, their constantly tired, their mental health is also really bad. ”

MY AGE:

15

ADDICTION

Youth described the addictive nature of vaping and nicotine over **71** times.

“A few year's ago I was friends with this girl she was in high school and she wanted me to try her vape, I regret ever doing it cause I hung out with her alot and I sorta got addicted and it's impacted my life alot I've tried to quit but it's hard.”

MY AGE: 14

“Gotten addicted and struggled with that”

MY AGE: 13

“My sister is my age and she is addicted. And because she is ~~addicted~~ ^{addicted} she keeps trying to convince me, my little siblings, little cousins, and my older siblings. And she has to steal the vapes. Because of that dad got meaner and she gets in more trouble.”

MY AGE: 12

SCHOOL

Youth described their experiences and problems with vaping at school, notably their fear of using the school bathroom, over **88** times.

“I have seen that people that have vaped they pay less attention in class.”

MY AGE: 14

“It's impacted my life because it makes me feel uncomfortable to go to the bathroom at school because I know someone is probably vaping.”

MY AGE: 13

“Students at my school use the bathroom as a place to vape, which makes me and other people uncomfortable in using the bathroom. I have also had people close to me vape and I see the negative affects and how it changes them.”

MY AGE: 18

FRIENDS

Youth described the problems vaping has created in their friendships over **129** times.

“Vaping and Nicotine have impacted my life by ruining a friendship with one of my best friends. I stopped being friends with them because I was afraid I would fall down the wrong path and make me and my family dissapointed. In my friendship with this person she would also ask for money to buy Vapes and when I would say no She would say it's for her health.”

MY AGE: 12

“I used to be friends with girls who I know vape now. I do still want to be their friend but I don't want to put myself in a bad position, where I can get peer pressured into doing something bad. They lie all the time about it, and I don't want to lie all the time.”

MY AGE: 14

“ As a society I feel it has effect on kids personally. Being around people in my age group who vape as a sense of seeing that it's "cool" just isn't fun. When all people around me do is vape it makes me have a sense of loneliness knowing that I don't do it.”

MY AGE: 14

“ I was influenced to start vaping in 8th grade. i wasn't able to stop until the summer after 8th grade ended, although, i am still surrounded by those who still do. my friends, family, peers. being with my friends who do it, it's hard to say no, but i know it's bad. i try my best to resist, i am also exposed to second hand smoking. i quit. but it's hard when i'm surrounded.”

MY AGE: 15

FAMILY

Youth mentioned the impacts vaping and nicotine has had on their family over **826** times.

“Made it harder for my parents to trust me. I have to work around feeling like a failure everyday. hard to connect with people or have fun.”

MY AGE: 13

“My mom & my dad vape constantly and we struggle with their addictions ~~the~~ financially because of it.”

MY AGE: 14

“My parents got into vaping. Every time I begged them to stop they would lie about it. And I believe that they finally quit but because of vapes I have less trust in my parents.”

MY AGE: 12

“My 11 year old Step brother is getting Vapes from his friends at school. My 16 year old Step sister gets her vapes from her mom and grandma. My 16 year old Sister Vaped from 13-15 and quit when she developed asthma. My mom has had her Juul since i was in 4th grade. My dad has vaped since i was 10 in effort to quit his life long smoking habits.”

MY AGE: 15

“I have been surrounded by a family who all smoke/vape ^{since i was a baby} 24/7. It has made it hard to not try vaping. Due to my family and friends who vape all the time, i have been vaping since 7th grade and have tried cigarettes a couple of times. It's also really hard to stop bc its around me all the time.”

MY AGE: 16 years

QUITTING

Youth referenced themselves or someone in their life quitting or trying to quit over **114** times.

“in 7th grade I began drifting away from my friends and hanging out with kids that I thought in order for them to think I was cool I needed to smoke or vape, I ended up trying it and my mental health TANKED, my use of these items was off and on and ~~that's~~ I decided to stop using these things. After I stopped I ~~g~~ gained back my relationships with friends that wanted me for me and wanted the best for me. Since I have stopped → my mental health is 100% better, my confidence, my relationship with family, and my will to live my everyday life is significantly better. the best thing that has ever happened to me was deciding to live a life with no nicotine and other things.”

MY AGE: 17

CALL TO ACTION

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Recognize that tobacco and drugs like THC are changing.
- Set an example by being nicotine-free; access free services through the WI Tobacco Quit Line at [800 QUIT NOW](tel:800-QUIT-NOW).
- Make homes and cars completely nicotine-free, including e-cigarettes. This means no use by anyone, including family, friends, or guests.
- Learn about resources to help youth.
- Stay connected with the youth in your life and encourage regular [Small Talks](#).
- Offer support and encouragement to anyone trying to quit nicotine.
- If your child vapes, encourage and support them to quit; text “VAPEFREE” to [873373](tel:873373).

EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

- Recognize that tobacco and drugs like THC are changing.
- Print and display Stanford REACH Lab infographics in classrooms and other youth spaces.
- Create a supportive environment for open discussions about vaping and its effects.
- Provide information and resources on preventing and quitting vaping.



CALL TO ACTION

LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

- Learn more about youth vaping by exploring the resources at the end of this document.
- Support evidence-based prevention programs and Alternatives to Suspension (ATS) in local schools.
- Prioritize providing schools with the resources they need to address this current issue.
- Implement comprehensive smoke-free policies that prohibit the use of tobacco products, including vapes, in public spaces.
- Address the availability of products in your community.

WISCONSIN POLICYMAKERS

- Help communities respond to the youth vaping crisis.
- Prioritize youth vaping prevention, intervention, and cessation programs.
- Strengthen legislation to curb the availability and marketing of vaping products to minors.



RESOURCES & CONTACT INFO

Tobacco is Changing

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tobaccoischanging/>

Tobacco companies are rapidly developing new products and tactics. Stay updated on these changes, understand the industry's marketing strategies, and learn how you can take action.

THC is Changing

<https://www.northwoodscoalition.org/thc-is-changing-campaign-materials>

In addition to tobacco is changing, it is important to stay updated on new THC products. The THC is Changing Campaign was created and designed by Northwoods Coalition and Marshfield Clinic.

Stanford REACH Lab Infographics

<https://med.stanford.edu/halpern-felsher-reach-lab/resources.html>

The Stanford Medicine Halpern-Felsher REACH Lab has created various materials, including printouts, infographics, flyers, and more, available for free download and printing.

Vaping Conversation Guide

<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping/conversation-guide>

The American Lung Association has created a guide for caregivers with tips for talking to youth about vaping. Conversation tips include knowing the facts and finding the right time and place.

Alternatives to Suspension

<https://centralwinnicotinefree.org/our-initiatives/alternatives-to-suspension/>

The Nicotine Prevention Alliance of Central Wisconsin has created an Alternatives to Suspension guide for schools and other youth-serving organizations. This guide highlights alternative to suspension programs, youth cessation resources, and other coping skill curriculum options.



Courtney Tvedten, MPH, BS

Nicotine Prevention Alliance of Central Wisconsin
Public Health Educator | Marathon County Health Department
715-261-1931 | Courtney.Tvedten@marathoncounty.gov

Use the QR code to access the resource list online.



Nicotine Prevention Alliance of Central Wisconsin initiatives are funded by the Commercial Tobacco Prevention and Treatment Program, Division of Public Health, Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

