

# GET SMART **ABOUT DRUGS**

A DEA RESOURCE FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS & CAREGIVERS

## Teens and Vaping

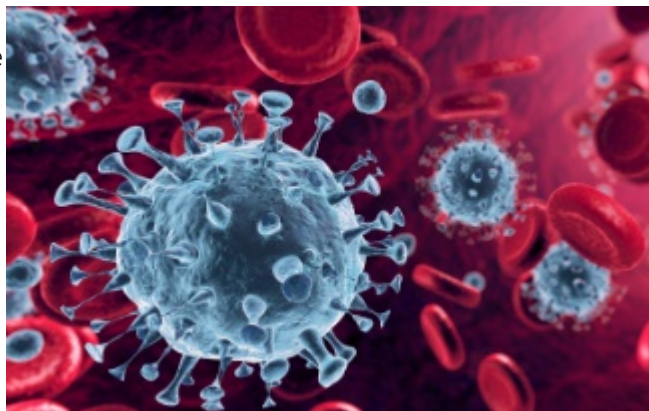
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### The Effects of Vaping and COVID-19

Right now, because the illness is relatively new, there isn't enough data showing a direct link between vaping (the use of an e-cigarette to inhale vapors from nicotine, marijuana or flavorings) and COVID-19 .

But here's what we do know:

- Vaping (and smoking) can cause damage to a person's lungs. Those activities can also affect a person's immune system.
- People with lung issues are more hurt by COVID-19 symptoms than healthy people.



"Why would you want to risk it when you already know vaping produces inflammatory changes in the lungs?" NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow [told Kaiser Health News](#).

"We know in medicine, a tissue that has suffered harm is more vulnerable.

The big centers where you are observing the rise in COVID-19 cases, that's where you are more likely to see the comorbidity of vaping," she said.

# Vaping Continues to Rise

Vaping [marijuana](#) continues to dramatically increase in popularity among teens, according to numbers from the latest [Monitoring the Future study](#).

In 2019, **14%** of high school seniors admitted to vaping marijuana in the past month. This is almost double the percentage from 2018.

In addition, **21%** of 12th graders reported vaping marijuana within the past year -- an increase from the 13.1 percent in 2018.

Researchers have been conducting this survey each year since 1975. This year, they surveyed over 42,000 8th, 10th, and 12th graders across the country about their [drug](#) use.

"The increases in vaping of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, are alarming for a number of reasons. For one thing, we don't yet know if THC's effects differ when vaped versus when smoked in a traditional fashion or whether the amount of THC that youth are being exposed to differs with these methods," wrote Dr. Volkow [in a her blog](#).



## More About Vaping and Why it's Dangerous for Teens

As mentioned earlier, the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigs) is also referred to as vaping. There are hundreds of different brands and a few different styles of e-cigs. But in general, they are all battery-operated devices that have a cartridge that holds a liquid solution. When a person puffs, the e-cig vaporizes the liquid and the user inhales the vapor.

Vaping marijuana (THC oil) can be more dangerous than smoking the drug. This is because people often vape a higher concentration of THC which, in turn, intensifies the high and can increase the "likelihood of addiction and adverse medical consequences," Dr. Volkow said during a teleconference about the study.

These new technologies for using drugs may result in an increase in teen drug use that wouldn't have occurred otherwise, she added.

[Studies have found](#) that regular marijuana use during the teen years disrupts brain development and can also lead to problems with attention span, behavior and impulse control in adulthood.

Besides health risks, using a vaporizer for marijuana can also be easier for teens to hide. They generally don't leave behind a mess and many vape devices can be concealed in the palm of one's hand.

**See more information about electronic cigarettes, and the Monitoring the Future study below:**

[Monitoring the Future Website](#)

[NIDA: What are Electronic Cigarettes?](#)

[DEA: Vaping and Marijuana Concentrates](#)