

Empowering Behavioral Health Aides: Practical Strategies for Alaska Native Youth Vaping

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Welcome & Purpose

- Vaping Trends Among Alaska Native Youth
- Health Concerns, Emerging Risks, & Misconceptions
- Prevention & Cessation Strategies
- Role of BHAs
- Communicating Effectively With Youth

History of Tobacco in Alaska

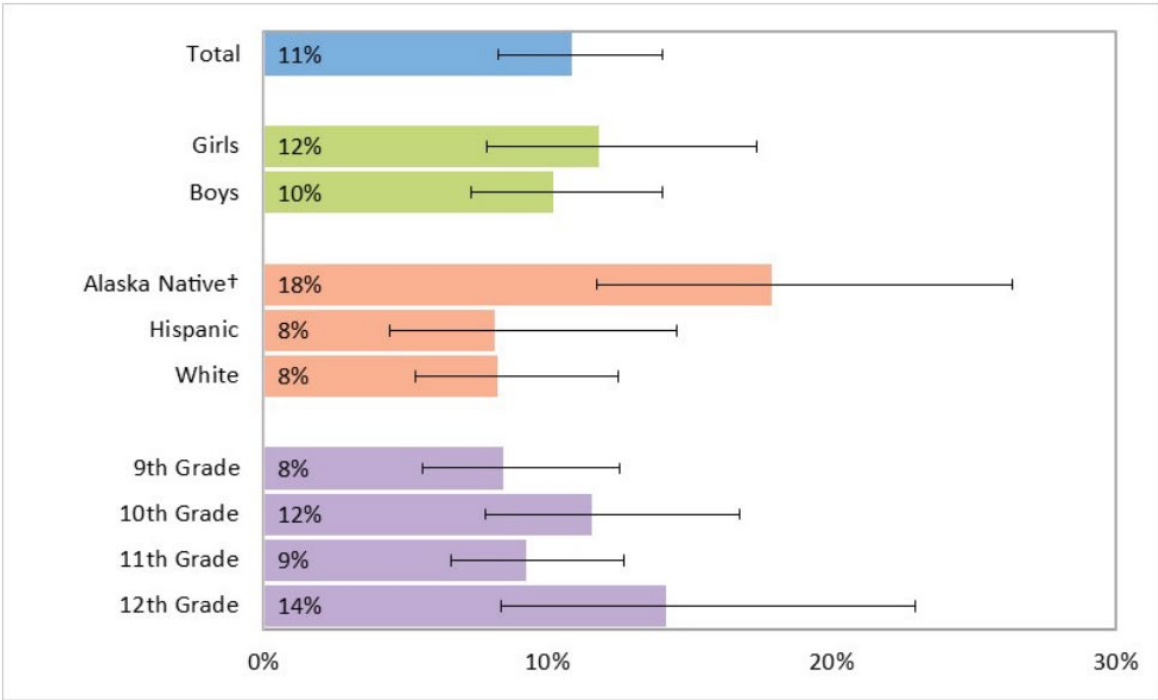
Alaska Native people did not have traditional or sacred uses of tobacco. Commercial tobacco was introduced through colonization, trade, & early contact with explorers, whalers, & fur traders. Use spread due to external influence. Over time, emerging products, targeted marketing & limited cessation resources contributed to elevated rates of vaping use.



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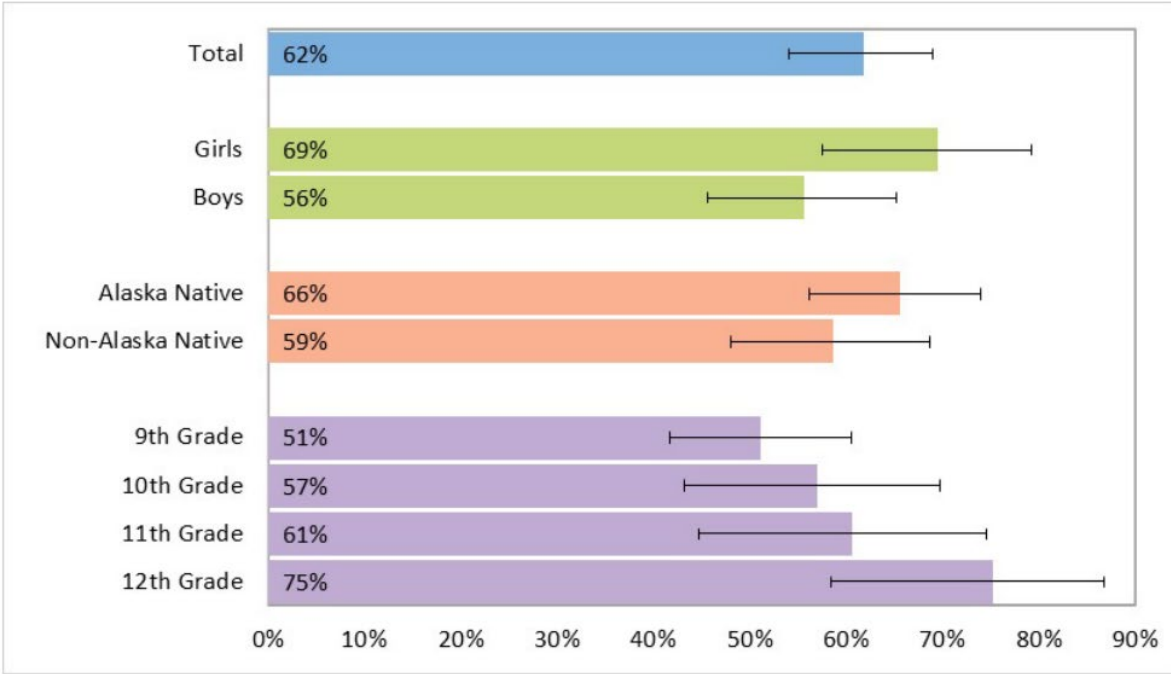
Data & Metrics

Figure 55. The percentage of high school students who currently used tobacco on school property in the past 30 days varied by subgroup.



Source: Alaska YRBS 2023.
“Current use” among youth is defined as using on one or more of the past 30 days.

Figure 56. The percentage of high school students who tried to quit all tobacco in the past 12 months did not vary by subgroup.

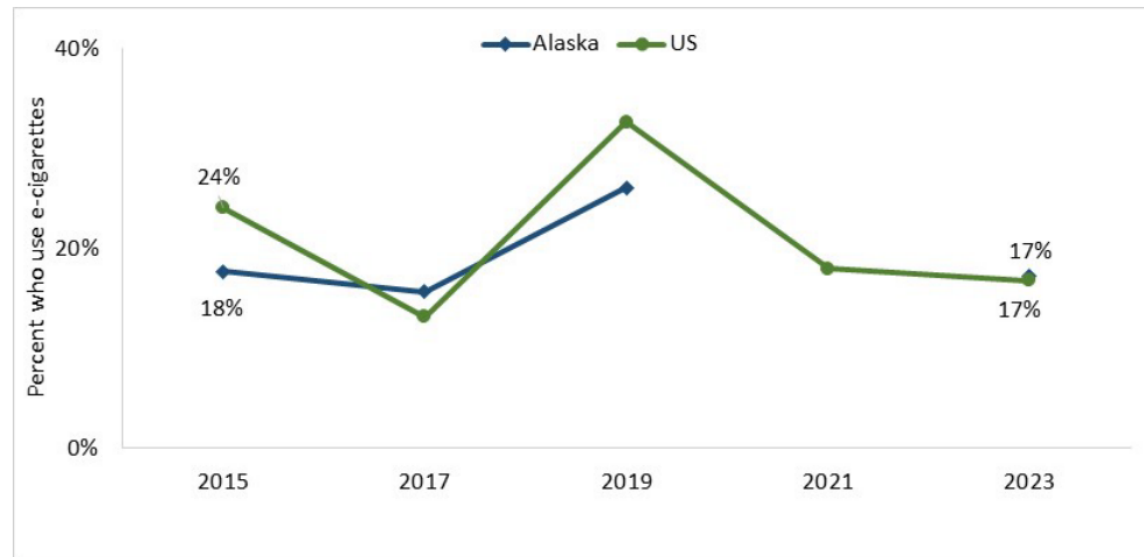


Source: Alaska YRBS 2023.

Data & Metrics

Electronic Vapor Product Use

Figure 57. The percentage of Alaska and U.S. high school students who currently use electronic vapor products decreased from a high in 2019.

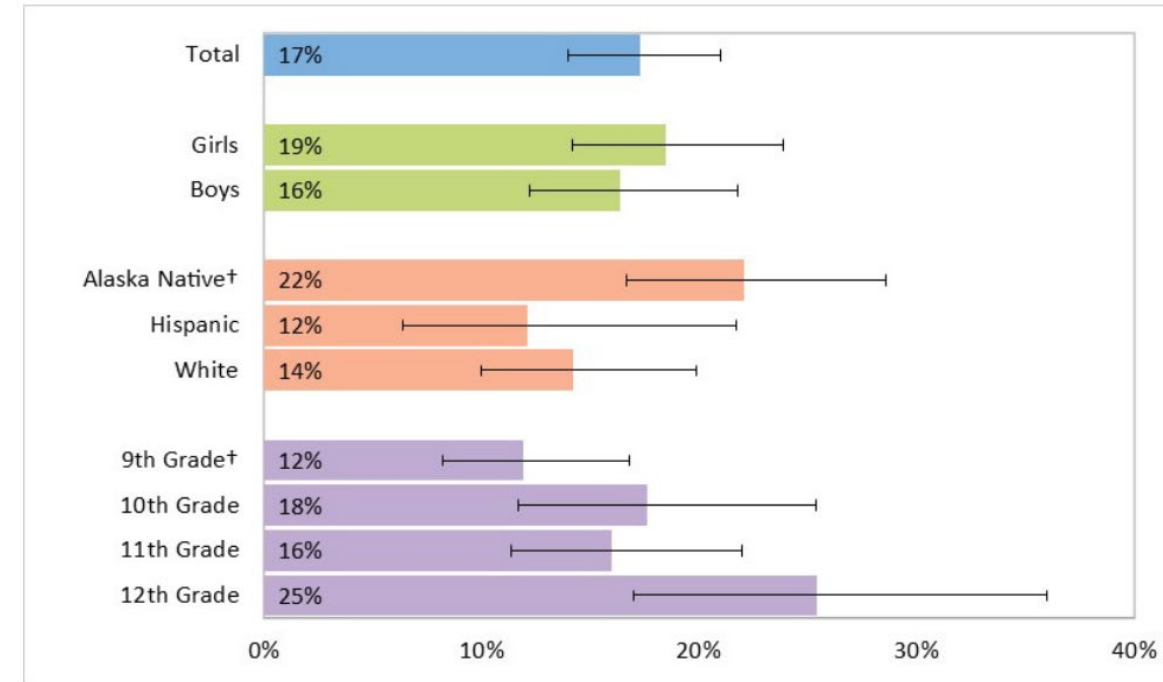


Source: Alaska YRBS 2015, 2017, 2019, 2023; national YRBS 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023.

“Current use” among youth is defined as using on one or more of the past 30 days.

Electronic vapor products are battery-operated nicotine devices that heat a liquid solution containing nicotine, flavorings and other chemicals into an aerosol that is inhaled. The YRBS asks about these products with the following introduction: “The next questions ask about electronic vapor products, such as JUUL, Vuse, MarkTen, and blu. Electronic vapor products include e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods.”

Figure 59. The percentage of Alaska high school students who currently use electronic vapor products varies by subgroup.

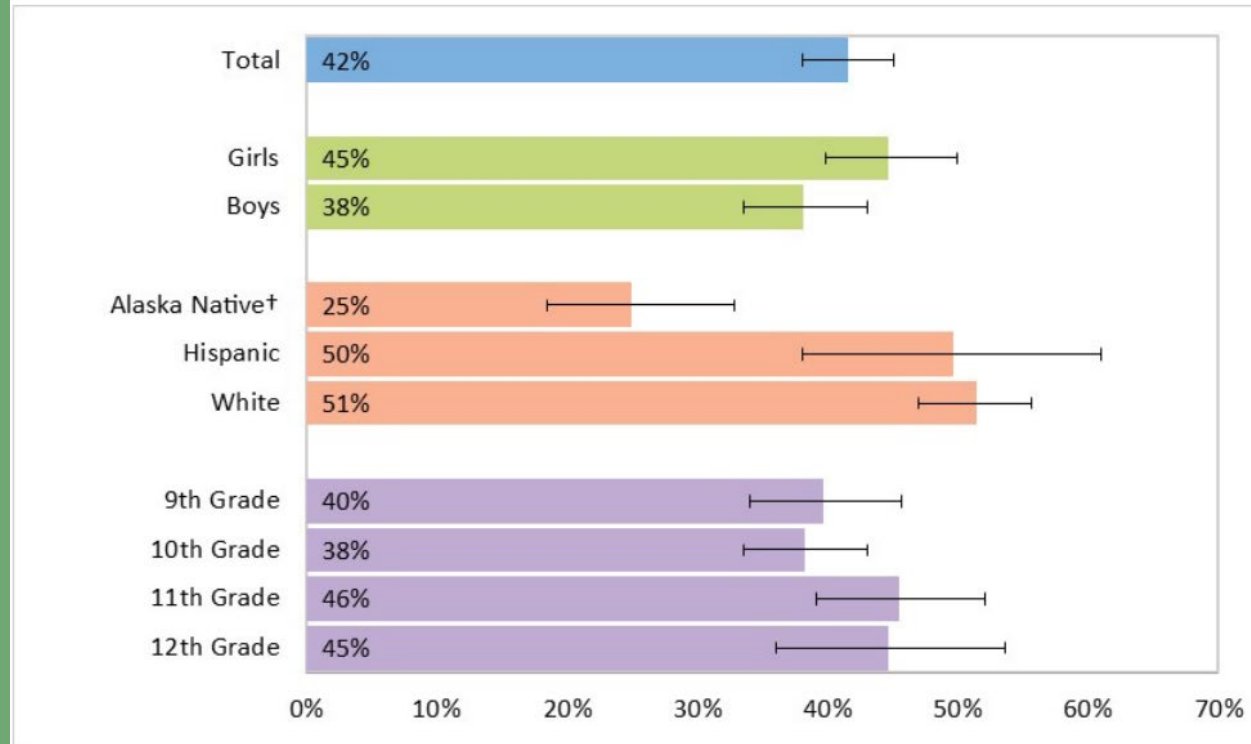


Source: Alaska YRBS 2023.

“Current use” among youth is defined as using on one or more of the past 30 days.

Misconception

Figure 60. There is some variation among Alaska high school students for believing that people take a great risk harming themselves if they use electronic vapor products every day.



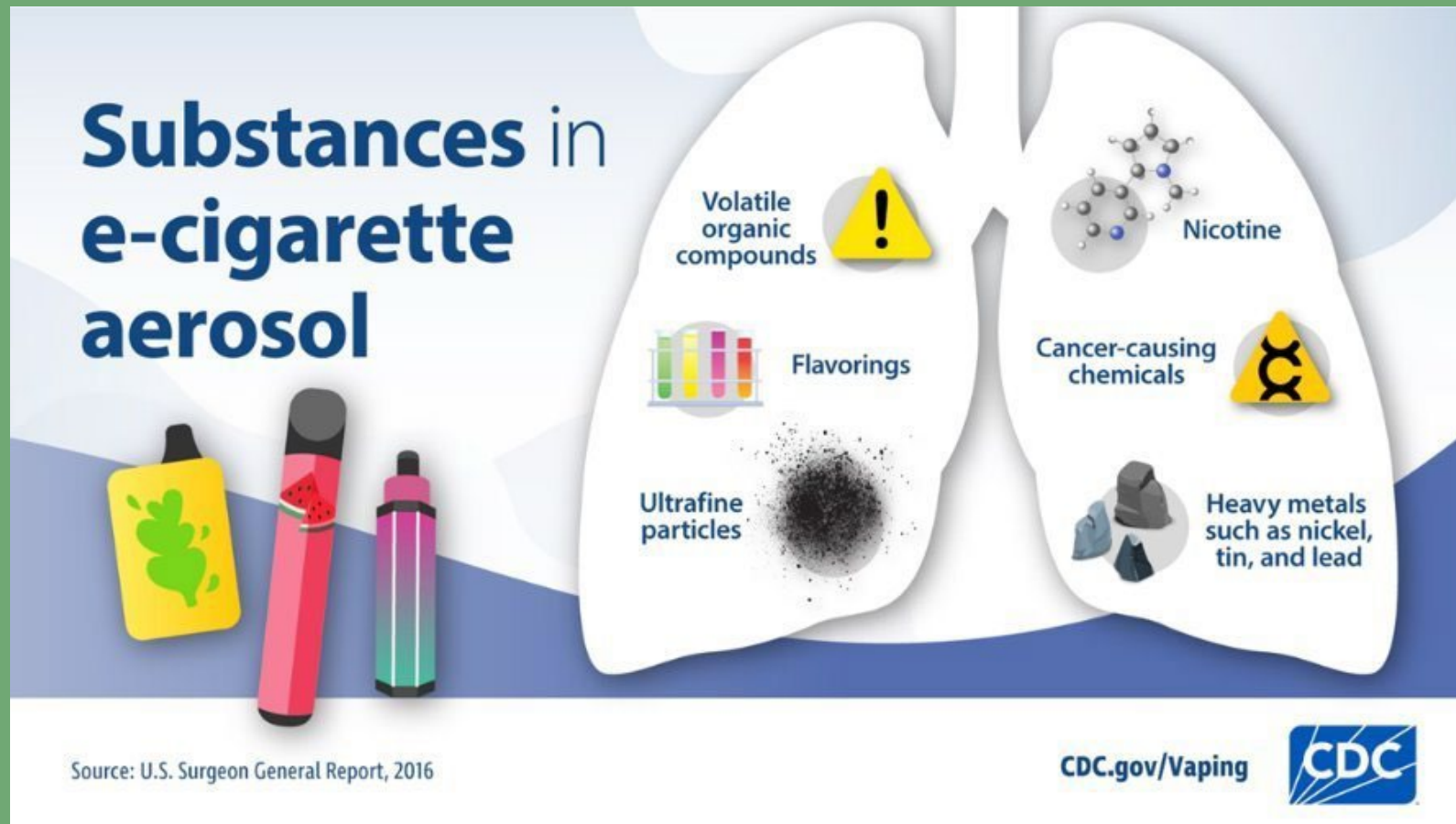
Source: Alaska YRBS 2023.

Risk Factors

- Propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerin: Can irritate lungs and airways. Typically used for theater/stage fog.
- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): Can irritate eyes, throat, and nose. Induce headaches and nausea. It can damage the kidneys, liver, and nervous system.
- Flavoring: diacetyl = lung disease.
- Formaldehyde: Cancer-causing chemical that releases when e-liquid is overheated or when “dry puffing” occurs



Beyond the Basics of Vaping



What Kind of Devices

How to Classify the User's E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Product

For an accessible explanation of schematic below on how to classify e-cigarettes, go to [Appendix, page 25](#).

Important notes:

1. E-liquids can contain nicotine, THC, CBD, flavors, or other solvents.
2. Marijuana herb, hash oil, dab wax are used with vaporizers.

QUESTION 1:

Is the e-liquid contained in a disposable e-cigarette, cartridge, tank, or pod?

Disposable e-cigarette
(no cartridge, tank or pod)

1st
GENERATION
(Cigalike)



Cartridge
(Prefilled or refillable)

QUESTION 2:
Is the cartridge also called a pod cartridge or contains nicotine salts?

NO

2nd
GENERATION
(Battery Pen)



YES



**Tank/
Sub-Ohm**
(Refillable)

3rd

GENERATION
(Modifiable—allows variable voltage/watts)



Pod
(Prefilled or refillable)

4th
GENERATION
(Pod Mod)



**Marijuana
herb, oil,
dab wax**

**Vaporizer,
Dab rig,
Dab pen**



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Secondhand & Thirdhand Exposure



- Vaping produces emissions that others can inhale (secondhand) & leaves residue on surfaces, clothing, & furniture (thirdhand exposure)
- These exposures contain chemicals & metals that can affect non-users, especially children.

Why do youth vape?

Advertising



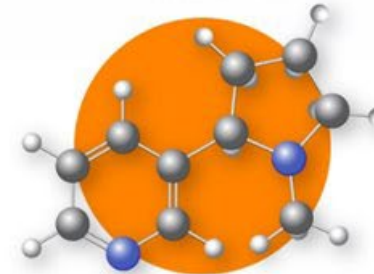
Flavors



Social
influences



Nicotine



[CDC.gov/Vaping](https://www.cdc.gov/Vaping)



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What vaping-related challenges are you seeing in
your community?



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Why Youth Vaping Prevention Matters

The highest rates of youth e-cigarette use nationally

Early initiation to increase lifelong health risks

Commercial tobacco drives major health disparities

AI/AN youth begin using tobacco at younger ages than other groups, increasing risk of addiction & long-term disease.

Contributes to lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death among AI/AN people.



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What reasons do youth in your region give for vaping?



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Protective Factors

- Cultural connection
- Strong relationships with adults
- Identity & belonging
- Community engagement

Why Vaping Matters for Mental Health

What the Data Shows

- Depression is associated with e-cigarette use
- AN students with low school connectedness have 27.2% vaping rates vs, 15.9% with high connectedness
- AN students whose basic needs are NOT always met: 27.8% vaping vs. 16.8% when needs are met
- Persistent sadness or hopelessness: 43% of Alaska high school students

What This Means for BHAs

- Youth may be self-medicating with tobacco/nicotine
- Connection protects from increased risk of isolation
- Housing, food, and safety come before quitting
- Vaping is often a symptom, not the root problem



Role of BHAs

Low-effort, high-impact ways to talk to youth about vaping

Ensure confidentiality

Practicing de-escalation & response

Youth may be defensive or misinformed

Teach BHAs practical skills:

- Reflective listening
- Staying calm under resistance
- Offering choices (give them autonomy) instead of directiveness
- Redirect conversations to safety & care (trauma-informed lens)

Harm reduction framing

Screen all patients 11+ for tobacco/vaping products, ideally in private

Use non-judgmental, open-ended questions

Offer direct, supportive advice to quit



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What approaches have helped you build trust with youth?



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Practical Strategies: Brief Intervention Screening Ask-Counsel-Treat (ACT)

- **Ask** (Start the conversation)
 - Do you use any vaping products?
 - Do your friends or family vape?
- **Counsel** (Active listener)
 - Be curious, not corrective
 - Reflect what they say
 - Connect to their goals
- **Treat** (Connect)
 - Offer support, not pressure
 - Coping tools
 - Referrals if necessary



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Practical Strategies: Supporting Youth Who Want to Quit

Cessation support tools & referral pathways

- Refer to hub clinic
- Alaska Tobacco Quit Line
- Not Buying It
- AK Live Vape Free

Medication Management Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

- Always talk to the provider about treatment options
- NRT is denied for ages 18 +; however, you can speak with a provider





Guiding youth toward clean breath and strong spirits – Vaping resources

August 1, 2025 | Tags: Community Partners, community wellness, Tobacco Prevention, Wellness and Prevention

<https://anthc.org/guiding-youth-toward-clean-breath-and-strong-spirits-vaping-resources/>

Empowering through knowledge

Many people who start vaping or using e-cigarettes believe it is a healthier alternative to smoking cigarettes. But the reality is that vaping can lead to nicotine dependency, harm brain development, or cause lung damage and other health issues, especially among youth.

We hope to empower Alaska Native youth, families, and communities through traditional wisdom, prevention knowledge, and shared responsibility, so they can make informed decisions about vaping. Explore resources and information for Alaska Native youth, parents and trusted adults.



Screening and Prevention of E-cigarette Use

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/tobacco-control-and-prevention/youth-tobacco-cessation-toolkits/e-cigarettes-and-vaping-toolkit/?srsltid=AfmBOoo41D4nEfbDTAJ5s4Aesw2WqsCZCAfPhfQZ--gswaxUx5WNYcOk>

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