

Smoking and Vaping Toolkit for Schools

This document offers tools and resources for school district staff, as well as educational materials for children in grades K-12, on the risks of smoking and vaping. Northern Health's [Legal Substance](#) team offers resources and consultation services to address the use of cannabis, commercial tobacco, and vapour products.

For further inquiries, please reach out to our Northern Health teams via HealthySchools@NorthernHealth.ca | TobaccoFree@NorthernHealth.ca

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Smoking, Vaping and Youth

While youth smoking rates have decreased, there is still a growing concern about the addictive potential of vaping with both cannabis and nicotine. Research indicates more young people are becoming dependent on vaping without fully understanding the health risks.

Schools play a vital role in promoting the health and well-being of children and youth. It is essential to educate individuals about substance use so they can make informed decisions about their health. This toolkit is intended to assist educators in discussing smoking and vaping with students in grades K-12, and to promote education on these topics within the school community.

Best Practice for Schools:

To address student use of smoking and vaping products, schools should use the [Comprehensive School Health Framework](#) with evidence-based strategies. Educators can follow the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Blueprint for Action: Preventing substance-related harms among youth through a Comprehensive School Health approach](#).

It is vital for interventions to be tailored to the unique values, needs, and resources of each school community. Schools should engage with their community members to ensure initiatives are practical, relevant, and effective. – **Blueprint for Action (2021)**



Adapted for use from the [Joint Consortium for School Health](#)

The best prevention measures often have nothing to do with substance use at all. There are many powerful protective factors within school communities, including healthy, supportive relationships between students and adults within the school and a high degree of school connectedness. – **Blueprint for Action (2021)**

Many traditional approaches to addressing youth substance use (e.g., zero tolerance policies, abstinence-only education, etc.) have limited effectiveness and can produce unintended negative consequences. – **Blueprint for Action (2021)**

Smoking and Vaping Prevention at Schools

School Adherence

Under the [Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act](#) and the [Cannabis Control and Licensing Act](#), cannabis, commercial tobacco, and vapour products are prohibited for use in and on school grounds. Below is a checklist of recommended strategies to help you encourage and maintain adherence at your school or district.

How many of the below strategies has your school implemented?

School Adherence Checklist	
Updated school policies and code of conduct on smoking, vaping, and safer use	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoke and vape-free signs are visible on school grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify problematic areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student / classroom smoke and vaping resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent / Guardian resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training for staff on smoking and vaping awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Host a smoke and vapour awareness event for parents / students / community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide cessation support to quit or limit use (posters, pamphlets)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statistics

For current statistics on youth smoking and vaping rates in Canada and BC, refer to:

- [Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey](#) | Health Canada
- [Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey \(CTNS\)](#) | Health Canada
- [Survey and Reports on BC youth](#) | McCreary Centre Society
- [2024 YDI School District Reports](#) | The CHART Lab

Information for Superintendents and School Administrators

 Here's what you can do

1. Address Student Smoke and Vapour Use	
Create or review and strengthen existing smoke and vapour-free policies and code of conduct. Make sure they meet or exceed both the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act and the Cannabis Control and Licensing Act .	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure smoke-free signs (Appendix 1) are visible on school property. Add signage around the perimeter of the school, and areas where students may congregate. Check if your local municipality has a smoke-free bylaw and if it specifies any requirements for schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Favour educational and supportive approaches rather than punitive ones, for example, implementing an Alternative to Suspension program for smoking and vaping incidents.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow the rules of the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act when using tobacco for ceremonial purposes with school board approval on school property.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substance use prevention starts with things unrelated to substances. Foster a Welcoming Environment that Promotes Well-Being .	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage students and recruit student voices to create effective policies, programs, and a positive environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage mental wellness and skill development to help students manage stress and reduce harm from smoking and vaping. Learn more about Mental Health Promotion and Effective Programming .	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure students and their families are aware of the policies by providing regular reminders.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designate staff to conduct regular walkabouts to maintain a visible presence and increase awareness and adherence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supports for substance use, mental health, and other health resources available to all school community members.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Inform Staff	
Provide training and reminders about the school policy on smoking and vaping so that everyone knows the rules and their roles.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help teachers stay informed about smoking and vaping. Refer to the Classroom resources for teachers and health educators .	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce stigma and help teachers promote open and non-judgmental Dialogue in the Classroom .	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Educate Parents	
Send an annual (or more frequent) newsletter/email home that talks about your school's policy and student expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents and guardians play an important role in talking with children and youth. Please refer to Student, Parent and Guardian Resources for more information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Support Cessation	
Smoking and vaping can be addictive and difficult to quit. Educate students and staff about Cessation Resources available.	<input type="checkbox"/>
While some individuals may not be ready to quit smoking or vaping, they could still benefit from support and guidance on Harm Reduction strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The long-term health consequences of vaping is unknown, vaping for cessation is not recommended.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connect with community partners to inquire about local services and supports for youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Factors to Review in Policy Implementation

 Here's what you can do

Policy Considerations	
Conforms with provincial legislation – Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act , Cannabis Control and Licensing Act .	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your school follows Blueprint for Action guidelines and best practices to prevent substance harm, while also supporting harm reduction strategies for safer substance use.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Definition of smoking and vaping includes: to inhale, exhale, burn, or carry a lighted blunt, cigarette, cigar, joint, pipe, hookah, activated electronic cigarette or other lighted or heated smoking equipment that burns or vaporizes cannabis, commercial tobacco, or e-substances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creates smoke and vape-free areas specified by signage: entrances, washrooms, school property, and other identified areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prohibits smoking and vaping on school grounds, vehicles, school-related events, and field trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establishes preventative actions, evidence-based education, and supportive measures for individuals that may smoke or vape.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly states educational, supportive, and restorative measures and avoid using punitive disciplinary actions for non-adherence.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Classroom Resources for Teachers and Health Educators

This section provides resources for grades K-12 educators, which may help inform students about the health risks of smoking and vaping. Educators can select resources that are most suitable for their classroom and students' needs.

1. Classroom Resources for Commercial Tobacco and Nicotine	
Indigenous Resources (Middle / High Grades)	Respecting Tobacco Videos, posters and more FNHA Youth Respecting Tobacco Videos, questions for classroom discussion FNHA
Tools for Schools (Gr 4-7 and 8-10)	PowerPoints, and resources for schools. BC Lung Toolkit with Clearing the Air (Gr 4-7) and Exploring the Cloud (Gr 8-10).
Canadian Lung Association (Gr 4-7)	Thought-provoking video about candy and dessert flavoured products to increase the appeal Flavoured Vapes Hook Kids – YouTube
Health Canada Youth Vaping Prevention Resources	Videos and tip sheets for teachers, including interactive learning activities for middle and high school students. Consequences of Vaping.
The HeartSmart Resource (Gr 7-9)	Interactive online or offline activity in which students investigate evidence files, test their knowledge, and solve a mystery and learn about health and vaping.
Lung Health Foundation (Gr 7-9)	What the Vape?!?!? Free interactive online course with short video modules that explore why vaping is not harmless, what youth can do and how to take action.
Health Canada / Answer in Progress (Gr 8-12)	YouTube influencer “Answer in Progress” explores the world of e-cigarettes and the simple law that derailed its original purpose: the law of unintended consequences (video 10 min).
iMinds Tobacco Lessons (Gr 4-12)	Lesson plans on commercial tobacco from the Canadian Institute of Substance Use Research.
Media Smarts Tobacco and Vaping Lessons (Gr 7-12)	Discussing cannabis, commercial tobacco and vaping advertisements with kids can help them understand how the industry tries to make smoking and vaping appear normal, safe, and less addictive.
Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit (Gr 7-12)	Lessons, kahoots, quizzes, discussion sheets and more.

2. Classroom Resources for Cannabis

<p>Indigenous Resources (Middle / High Grades)</p>	<p>Supporting Youth Videos, questions for classroom discussion FNHA</p> <p>Learn About Cannabis Questions for classroom discussion FNHA</p> <p>Non-Medical Cannabis Information Questions for classroom discussion FNHA</p>
<p>Pursue Your Passion (Gr 7-11)</p>	<p>Since 2018, Health Canada’s “Pursue Your Passion” campaign has provided cannabis educational resources to help teachers increase teens’ awareness of the potential effects of cannabis use on their brain and mental health.</p>
<p>Erase Not Knowing (Gr K-10)</p>	<p>Substances are things people take into their bodies (e.g., eating, drinking, or smoking) that change how they feel physically and/or emotionally.</p>
<p>ABC’s of Youth Substance Use (Gr K-12)</p>	<p>Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and positive mental health. The ABCs increase resilience and prevent, delay, and reduce substance-related harms.</p>
<p>Stanford Cannabis Awareness and Prevention Toolkit (Gr K-12)</p>	<p>Theory-based and evidence-informed resources aimed at preventing middle and high school students’ use of cannabis.</p>
<p>iMinds Cannabis Lessons (Gr 4-12)</p>	<p>Lesson plans on cannabis from the Canadian Institute of Substance Use Research.</p>
<p>Toolkit for Educating Youth Sensible Cannabis Education</p>	<p>Created for educators, as well as parents; this resource aims to support adults in having informed and non-judgmental conversations with young people about cannabis.</p>

3. Student, Parent and Guardian Resources

<p>Talking with Your Teen About Vaping</p>	<p>A Health Canada resource for parents with information about vaping, ways to talk with teenagers about vaping, and how to get support.</p>
<p>Talking Pot with Youth: A Cannabis Communication Guide for Youth Allies</p>	<p>Provides introductory information and a set of exercises to engage youth in meaningful discussions and conversations about cannabis.</p>
<p>Preventing Kids and Teens from Smoking and Vaping</p>	<p>Helping to prevent kids and teens from smoking and vaping starts with a talk with someone they can trust and who cares about their health and well-being.</p>
<p>Talking Cannabis</p>	<p>Keeping the lines of communication open with kids can make a big difference in preventing harms from cannabis use.</p>

4. Harm Reduction and Lower-Risk Guidelines

[How to Read and Understand a Cannabis Product Label - Canada.ca](#)

[Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines \(LRCUG\) for Youth](#)

[Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines for Youth by Youth](#)

[Lower-Risk Nicotine Use Guidelines \(LRNUG\)](#)

5. Cessation Resources

[BC Smoking Cessation Program](#)

[Brief Conversations Toolkit](#)

[Cannabis FAQ](#)

[Talk Tobacco](#)

[QuitNow](#)

[QuitNow's Youth Vaping Mini Site](#)

[Quash App – Quit Vaping](#)

6. Additional Resources

HealthLink BC – [Cannabis](#)

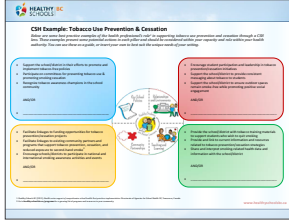




HealthLink BC – [Quitting Smoking](#)

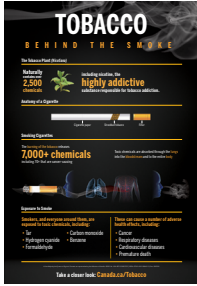

Foundry – [Where Wellness Takes Shape](#)

Metis Nation of British Columbia – [Mental Health and Harm Reduction](#)

Appendix 1

Signage and Print Resources

Print Resources		
Name	Picture	Access link to download
<p>Healthy Schools BC</p> <p>CHS: Example: Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Credit: Healthy Schools BC</p>
<p>BC Ministry of Health</p> <p>Vaping laws: What you need to know</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Credit: BC Ministry of Health</p>
<p>Government of Canada</p> <p>What You Need to Know if You Choose to Consume Cannabis</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Find additional cannabis education resources here</p> <p>Credit: Government of Canada University of Waterloo</p>
<p>BC Lung Foundation</p> <p>Vaping: An overview</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Find additional youth vaping education resources here</p> <p>Credit: BC Lung Foundation</p>
<p>Government of Canada</p> <p>Vaping can cause lung damage</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Find additional youth vaping prevention resources here</p> <p>Credit: Government of Canada</p>

Print Resources		
Name	Picture	Access link to download
<p>Government of Canada Behind the Smoke</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Find additional youth vaping prevention resources here</p> <p>Credit: Government of Canada</p>
Signage		
Name	Picture	Access link to download
<p>BC Ministry of Health Smoke / Vape-Free Grounds (sign example)</p>		<p>Click here to download a printable copy of this poster</p> <p>Please email info@bclung.ca for further assistance.</p> <p>Credit: BC Ministry of Health</p>

Definitions

Cannabis: A plant commonly used for its psychoactive effects, primarily as a recreational drug. It contains compounds such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) that have various effects on the brain and body.

Commercial Tobacco: Products, like cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco, is harmful to one’s health. Commercial tobacco should not be confused with traditional tobacco used by Indigenous peoples for spiritual, cultural, and sacred medicinal purposes.

Smoking: The act of inhaling and exhaling the smoke of burning cannabis, commercial tobacco, or other substances. It is a practice that is often done for recreational purposes, it is also associated with a variety of health risks and harmful effects on the body.

Vaping / Vapour: The act of inhaling and exhaling vapour from electronic devices, usually containing nicotine or cannabis, flavourings, and chemicals. It is different from smoking because there is no combustion involved.

Reproduction of this toolkit

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