



Vaping and the Middle School Teacher

Brendan Kernan- Middle School Health Education
Teacher





Introduction

For each grade 6th, 7th, and 8th a main unit for Health Education is Substance Use Prevention, during this unit each grade focuses on different core curriculum concepts that build upon the previous year

Each grade has its own set of State indicators used to develop a pathway for education and prevention

Importance of a Substance Use Prevention Unit

- Middle school students are in a very important developmental stage, students experience significant physical, emotional, and social changes with an increase in vulnerability.
- This age group is particularly susceptible to trying substances due to peer pressure, curiosity, and the desire for acceptance.
- Education on substance use prevention during these formative years can influence students' attitudes and behaviors toward substance use in the future empowering students to make informed choices
- Building resilience through prevention programs can equip students with coping strategies and promote resilience, allowing them to handle stressors without resorting to substances.
- Addressing myths and misconceptions through fact-based education provides accurate information about the risks and consequences of substance use and helps to debunk common myths that may glamorize or trivialize the issue.

6th Grade- Substance Use Prevention

Grade 6 Maryland Framework:

- Describe situations that could lead to the use of nicotine products 1b.6.4
- Determine reasons why people choose to use or not use nicotine products 1b.6.5

Skills Developed: Analyzing Influences and Self-Management

Content for 6th grade students is linked to the wellness star. It focuses on Physical, Emotional, Social and Spiritual consequences. Students use various reliable sources of information to explain how nicotine use could affect different areas of wellness.

7th Grade-Substance Use Prevention

Grade 7 Maryland Framework:

- Identify the physical effects of nicotine products 1b.7.2
- Describe negative consequences of using nicotine products 1b.7.3
- Describe positive alternatives to using nicotine 1b.7.4
- Explain why using nicotine is an unhealthy way to manage stress, anxiety, depression 1b.7.5
- Determine the benefits of being free from nicotine substances 1b.7.6

Skills Developed: Accessing Information and Advocacy

7th Grade Substance Use Prevention

The focus for the Content for 7th grade is for student to be able to examine how vaping and nicotine affect the teenage brain.

Students rotate through 5 stations activity-

Station 1: “Vaping, The Hit Your Brain Takes” Video

Station 2: CDC Health Effects of Vaping article

Station 3: Brochure: “About Vaping”

Station 4: Interactive Website: “Dangers of Vaping” (NIDA/NIH)

Station 5: NIDA article: “Nicotine Affects the Teen Brain”


Using the knowledge gathered from stations students write a persuasive paragraph to a friend convincing them to reconsider vaping

8th Grade- Substance Use Prevention

Grade 8 Maryland Framework:

- Summarize the negative consequences of using alcohol, nicotine products, marijuana products, opioids (including the lethal effects of fentanyl), and other trending drugs or substances. 1b.8.1
- Describe the relationship between substance use and health risks including unintentional injuries, violence, suicide, and sexual risk behaviors. 1b.8.2
- Defend the benefits of being free from alcohol, opioids, nicotine products, marijuana products, and other trending drug or substances. 1b.8.4

Content in grade 8 Focuses on addiction, addiction and the brain. The primary focus is medication and opioids and not vaping/nicotine



The local health department has been a resource for information for teachers and students. They provide guest speaker (upon teacher request) and training opportunities for health education teachers. Training for teachers in 2024-2025 included a session on nicotine to update teachers on trends and best practices for prevention.
