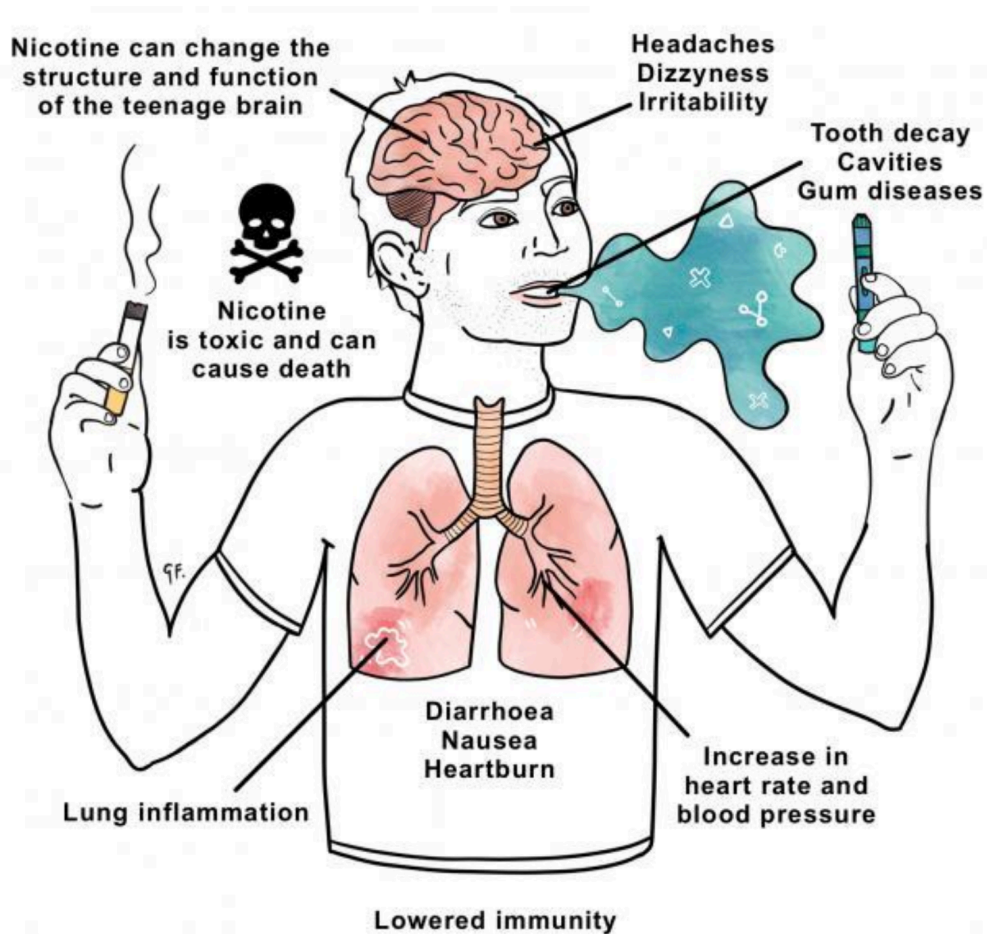


The Hidden Health Risks of Vaping

You've probably heard vaping messes with your lungs, but that's just the surface. What most people don't talk about is how it scrambles your sleep and damages your memory. Vaping doesn't just affect your lungs; it can also make you anxious, mentally foggy, and emotionally drained. You might not connect your mood swings, your lack of focus, or your 2 a.m. insomnia to that sleek little device you hit between classes, but science does. The damage hits your mind just as hard as your body, and most of it happens silently until it doesn't. According to the CDC, common nicotine withdrawal symptoms include feeling irritable, anxious, or sad; having trouble sleeping or concentrating; increased hunger; and strong cravings to vape (CDC, n.d.). These effects can stick around for a long time, and one hospital visit won't fix it. That's the trap: vaping changes how your brain works. It rewires how you handle stress, focus, and even your mood. So when you try to stop, it hits hard. You don't just feel cravings—you feel off. Your brain doesn't know how to feel normal without it. That is just what's happening above the surface. The physical and neurological effects run even deeper.

Figure 1

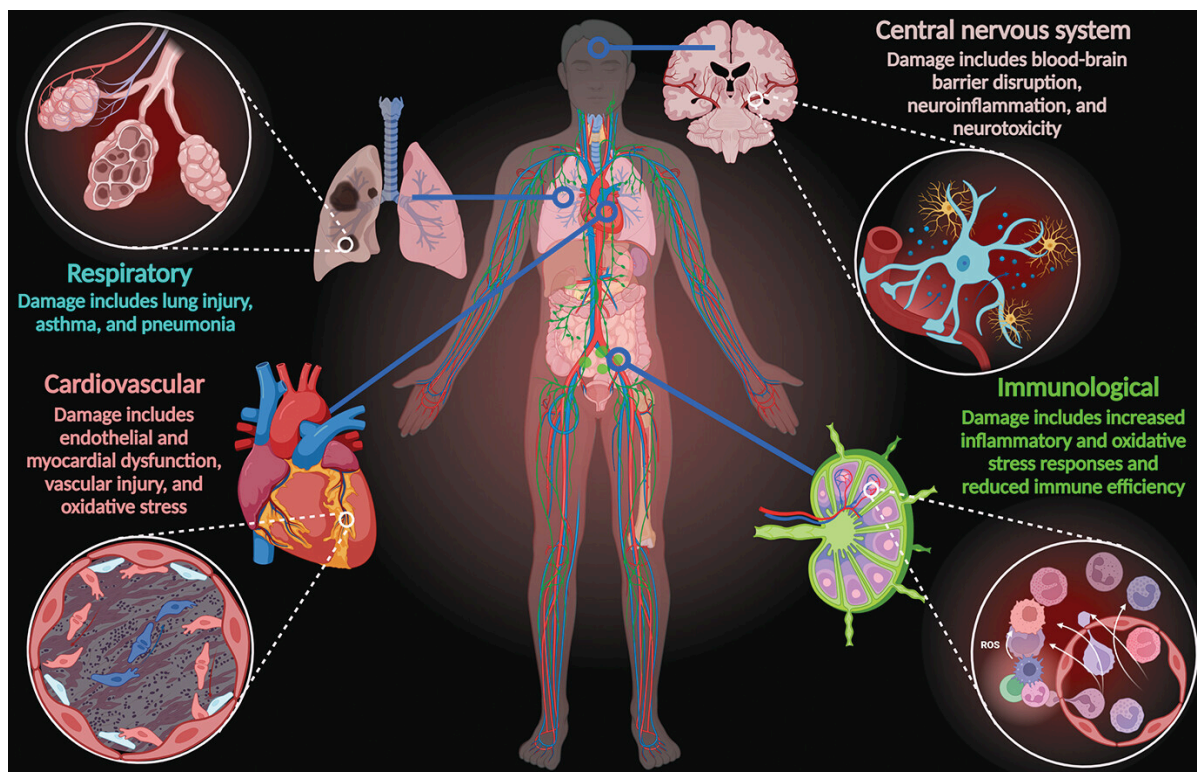


Note. Illustration showing the health effects of vaping on teens, including brain development, lung function, and heart rate (KidsHealth NZ, n.d.)

Vaping interferes with the systems that control learning, emotion, and decision-making. The teen brain is still wiring itself, and nicotine exposure can interrupt that development, making it harder to grow into a focused, emotionally balanced adult. Over time, vaping can weaken your immune system, slow down healing, and increase your risk of respiratory infections even if you feel fine day to day. According to Dr. Frances M. Leslie, many teens say they vape to cope with stress or bad moods, but research shows that nicotine can make mental health worse. Studies have found a strong link between teen vaping and increased rates of anxiety and depression

(Patton et al., 1998; Jamner et al., 2003; McKenzie et al., 2010; Leventhal et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2018). While some teens may not start vaping to deal with emotional struggles, the truth is that it often creates a cycle where nicotine makes those same problems even harder to manage. According to Taylor, Szigeti, and Kamboj (2024), vaping causes serious damage throughout the human body, including organs in the cardiovascular, central nervous, immunological, and respiratory systems. This damage is primarily due to the deleterious effects of toxic compounds that exacerbate oxidative stress responses and inflammatory reactions.

Figure 2



Note. Illustration showing the effects of vaping on various body systems, including respiratory, cardiovascular, nervous, and immunological damage.

According to The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, it's linked to problems with memory, focus, and impulse control. Teens who vape regularly also have higher

levels of stress hormones in their bodies. And it doesn't take years to show up—these effects can hit even if you only vape sometimes. It can drag down your mood, your concentration, and how well you do in school. You might feel fine now, but that doesn't mean the damage isn't happening. It builds quietly, day by day, and by the time you notice the impact on your life, the truth is that vaping hits harder than you think.

Beyond the physical health risks, vaping poses a major threat to adolescent mental health. A comprehensive review published in the Journal of Community Hospital Internal Medicine Perspectives found that adolescents who use e-cigarettes are more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression and suicidality (Javed et al., 2022). Notably, the combination of conventional and electronic cigarette use exacerbates these conditions, with female adolescents exhibiting higher adverse effects on mental health. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the psychological implications of vaping among youth. The solutions go beyond just physical health; both need to be addressed to help teens recover not only their bodies but also their focus, confidence, and mental clarity.

References

- Javed, S., Usmani, S., Sarfraz, Z., Sarfraz, A., Hanif, A., Firoz, A., Baig, R., Sharath, M., Walia, N., Chérrez-Ojeda, I., & Ahmed, S. (2022). *A scoping review of vaping, e-cigarettes, and mental health impact: depression and suicidality*. *Journal of Community Hospital Internal Medicine Perspectives*, 12(3), 33–39.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9195082/>
- KidsHealth NZ. (n.d.). *Vaping: Information for young people*. Healthify He Puna Waiora.
<https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/vaping-young-people>
- Levin, A. C., & Leslie, F. M. (2020). *Unique, long-term effects of nicotine on the adolescent brain*. *Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior*, 197, 17310
<https://www.sciencedirect-com.ccnny-proxy1.libr.ccnny.cuny.edu/science/article/pii/S0091305720302185>
- López-Ojeda, W., & Hurley, R. A. (2024). Vaping and the Brain: Effects of Electronic Cigarettes and E-Liquid Substances. *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 36(1), A5-5. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.neuropsych.20230184>