

EDUCATOR'S HANDBOOK

Helping educators build understanding, encourage self-awareness, and support youth at different stages of nicotine use and change.



INTRODUCING: NICOTINE EXPOSÉ KIT 3

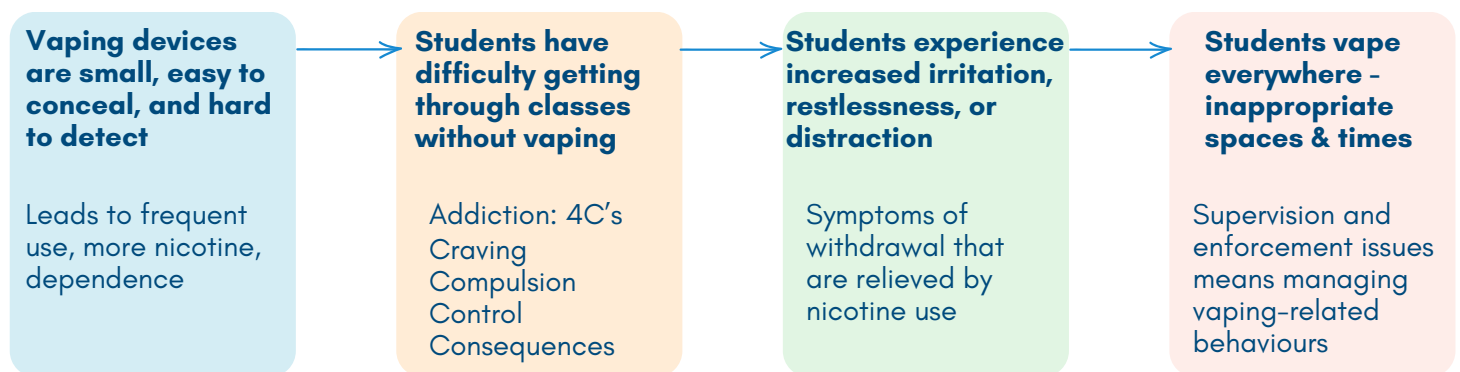


Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in the Nicotine Exposé Kit 3. By Grades 11 and 12, vaping and nicotine use are part of the reality many students are navigating, whether they use nicotine themselves or are affected by its presence among family, friends, peers, and within the school environment. Addressing this issue in high school creates a logical opportunity to move beyond general prevention messaging and help students understand nicotine dependence, recognize its impact, and learn about available quitting supports.

Students may be having different experiences with nicotine and vaping. Some do not use nicotine. Some may be experimenting or using socially. Others may already be experiencing dependence, considering change, trying to cut back, or looking for help to quit.

Educators across Newfoundland and Labrador are telling us that vaping brings unique pressures into schools. You are navigating a complex landscape driven by:



The Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 is designed to serve two purposes: to strengthen prevention and health literacy for students who do not use nicotine, and to provide relevant, non-judgmental education and support for students who may already be using nicotine or considering change. This intentional approach is intended to help you support all students - whether they vape, are thinking about vaping, or have never tried it.

The Educator's Manual is designed to help you deliver the resource with confidence. It provides background information on nicotine dependence and the developing brain, learning objectives, guidance for classroom use, assessment and evaluation support, and strategies for responding to student comments.

The Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 is one part of a broader response to youth nicotine use and dependence. Your role in providing accurate information, creating space for thoughtful discussion, and helping students connect with support can make an important difference.

Thank you for stepping into this important work.

With gratitude,

The NL Alliance for the Control of Tobacco



THE EFFECT OF NICOTINE ON THE YOUNG BRAIN

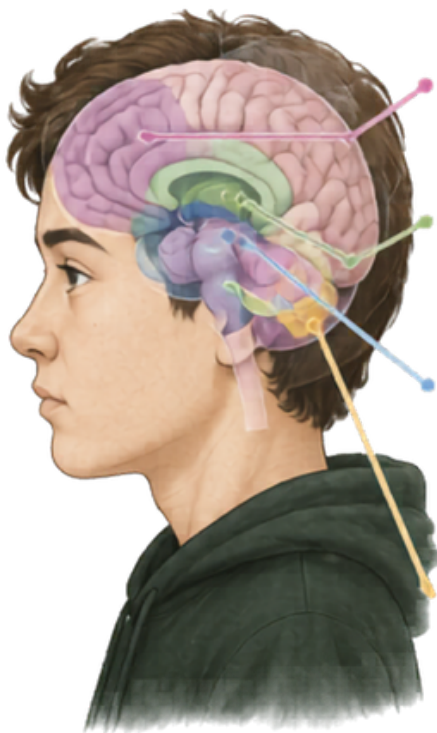


**YOUNG BRAINS ARE STILL DEVELOPING.
NICOTINE CAN INTERFERE WITH THAT PROCESS.**

WHY IS THE YOUNG BRAIN MORE VULNERABLE?

The brain continues to develop into the mid-20s, especially in areas that control attention, learning, emotions, and decision-making. Nicotine exposure during this time can interfere with healthy brain development and increase the risk of long-term addiction.

HOW NICOTINE AFFECTS THE DEVELOPING BRAIN:



Prefrontal Cortex

Controls planning, decision-making & impulse control. Nicotine can disrupt its development, affecting attention, judgment, and self-control.



Hippocampus

Important for learning, memory, and motivation. Nicotine can impair memory, learning, and stress regulation.



Reward Pathway

Responsible for pleasure, motivation, and enjoyment. Nicotine overstimulates this system and increases the risk of addiction.



Amygdala

Processes emotions and stress. Nicotine can increase anxiety, mood swings, and emotional reactivity.



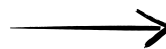
No amount of nicotine is safe for a developing brain. The earlier youth use nicotine, the greater the risk of addiction and long-term harm.



The brain has an incredible ability to heal. Quitting nicotine can allow the brain to recover and support better focus, mood, learning, and overall well-being.

NICOTINE HIJACKS BRAIN CHEMISTRY...

Nicotine stimulates the release of key brain chemicals, creating short-term feelings of pleasure, focus, and calm.



OVER TIME, THE BRAIN ADAPTS.

Natural triggers are replaced by nicotine triggers. The brain begins to rely on nicotine to feel regulated.

NICOTINE ENTERS THE BRAIN



DOPAMINE

Creates feelings of pleasure and reward.

SEROTONIN

Influences mood, well-being, and happiness.

NOREPINEPHRINE

Short-term boost of alertness, focus, and attention.

ADRENALINE

Increases heart rate, arousal, and the fight-or-flight response.

ENDORPHINS

Reduce pain and create feelings of euphoria.

DEPENDENCE DEVELOPS

Cravings, withdrawal, and stress become part of a cycle that is hard to break.

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE



Nicotine Exposé Kit 3:

- **Recognizes that students come to this learning from different starting points.** Some do not use nicotine. Some are experimenting or using socially. Others may be experiencing dependence, thinking about change, or trying to quit.
- **Is designed to be relevant across this spectrum,** building health literacy, helping students recognize dependence, supporting informed decisions, and strengthening their ability to respond when they or someone they know needs help.

Students connect with different parts of the resource in different ways

Some may respond most strongly to:

- Addiction and dependence content
- Industry and ethics discussions
- Quitting support information
- Helping others
- The V-SHIFT connection

Even brief engagement can make a difference.

- Recognize how dependence can develop
- Consider nicotine's influence
- Understand why quitting can be difficult
- Discover that support exists
- Feel less alone in their experience

Why Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 focuses on addiction, dependence, and quitting support

By Grades 11 and 12, prevention remains important, but some students need more. They may already be experiencing nicotine dependence, thinking about change, trying to cut back, or looking for help to quit.

Now, many youth are asking:

"Why can't I get through class without vaping?"

"Why do I feel anxious without it?"

"Why is it so hard to stop?"

"How do people actually quit?"

For some students, this may be the first time nicotine dependence and quitting support are addressed in a way that feels relevant to their experience. For others, it builds understanding of what friends, peers or family members may be experiencing.

USING NICOTINE EXPOSÉ KIT 3 IN THE CLASSROOM



The Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 is designed to support meaningful classroom learning for students in Grades 11-12 through information, reflection, discussion, and access to quitting supports.

RECOMMENDED CLASSROOM APPROACH



THE PRESENTATION BUILDS THE FOUNDATION BY:

- Establishing core knowledge
- Preparing students to engage with the workbook
- Framing vaping as a health & dependence issue



THE WORKBOOK DEEPENS THE LEARNING BY:

- Promoting reflection
- Introducing support resources
- Encouraging critical thinking



V-SHIFT EXTENDS THE LEARNING BY:

- Allowing students to explore quitting privately and at their own pace
- Reinforcing key information & practical strategies
- Connecting students to credible support resources



LINK TO SENIOR HIGH LEARNING

Resources can be:

- ✓ delivered over several classes/subject areas.
- ✓ integrated into existing courses/units.
- ✓ connected to SEL, writing, discussion or media analysis.
- ✓ used to support broader wellness & mental health initiatives.



TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

Encourage your students to:

- ✓ engage with curiosity.
- ✓ participate respectfully.
- ✓ reflect thoughtfully.
- ✓ ask questions & explore ideas.

DELIVERING NICOTINE EXPOSÉ KIT 3 WITH A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS



CREATING A SAFE SPACE, PROMOTING PERSONAL CHOICE AND OFFERING SUPPORT.

Students bring different experiences to this learning. A trauma-informed approach helps them engage without requiring disclosure, self-assessment, or discussion of experiences they prefer to keep private.

1 BEFORE YOU PRESENT:

- Let students know in advance that the class will discuss nicotine dependence, health, and quitting.
- Identify any school supports available in case a student wants to talk with someone.
- Plan how a student can step out, take a break, or speak privately with a trusted adult if needed.
- Be familiar with the confidential supports included in Nicotine Exposé Kit 3.

2 DURING THE PRESENTATION

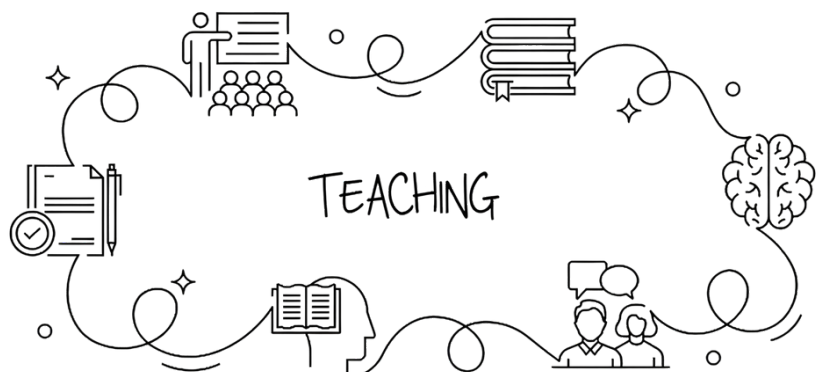
- Remind students that personal disclosure is never required.
- Keep questions and discussion general or hypothetical, not about students' own nicotine use.
- Teach about cravings, withdrawal, triggers, and dependence without asking students to assess or diagnose themselves or others.
- Allow students to pass on a discussion question or use an alternate way to participate if an activity feels too personal.
- Use respectful, person-first, and non-stigmatizing language.

3 KEEP SUPPORT VISIBLE

- Students may recognize themselves, or someone they care about, in the information being presented.
- Pair potentially concerning information with messages of hope, support, and capacity for change.
- Make it clear that students can explore support without committing to quit.
- Direct personal concerns to appropriate school, health, or confidential quitting supports rather than exploring them in front of the class.

YOUR ROLE AS AN EDUCATOR IS TO INFORM, SUPPORT, AND CONNECT.

You are not expected to assess nicotine dependence, diagnose a substance use disorder, or provide counselling. Your role is to provide accurate information, create a respectful learning environment, respond supportively, and help students connect with appropriate supports when needed.



CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH QUIT SUPPORT



Students may need different kinds of support at different times. The resources featured in the workbook and infographics offer trusted options, from independent self-help to confidential, individualized counselling. Teachers can confidently refer students for support without being expected to provide quitting advice or counselling themselves.

LOCAL CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT



EXIT the Vaping Experience is an online resource offered by the NL Smokers' Helpline. It provides youth-focused quit-vaping information, practical strategies, and support for managing cravings and withdrawal. Youth can also access confidential coaching and help planning a quit approach that works for them.

SELF-GUIDED PLANNING

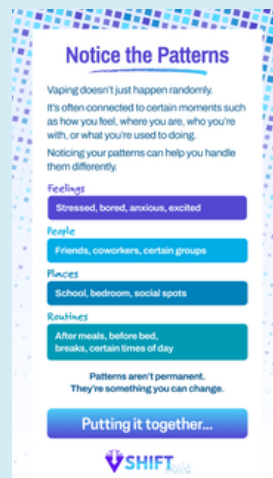


I quit for me is a free Health Canada guide for youth ages 14-18. It provides a step-by-step quitting process to help youth identify their reasons, prepare for cravings and withdrawal, choose strategies that fit their lives, and recognize progress along the way. Works for students who want a clear, self-directed plan they can follow at their own pace.

PRIVATE EXPLORATION



Vaping: Self-Help, Insights & Fact Tool



V-SHIFT, created exclusively for the Nicotine Exposé Kit 3, places practical quit-vaping information in reach on a student's phone. This mobile-friendly tool helps youth understand nicotine, recognize patterns and triggers, manage cravings, explore coping strategies, and consider realistic next steps at their own pace. It is useful for students who want to explore privately or are not yet ready to speak with someone.

No personal information is collected or retained.

A SIMPLE WAY TO OFFER SUPPORT

"You do not have to decide anything today. These resources can help you explore your options privately or connect with someone when you are ready."



NICOTINE EXPOSÉ KIT 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Building health literacy, self-awareness and capacity for change



The learning objectives identified below extend beyond any single subject area. Together, they support health literacy, personal development, communication, critical thinking, self-determination, and social responsibility. These competencies are relevant across senior high learning and to students' lives beyond school.

1 UNDERSTAND NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

Analyze how nicotine affects the developing brain and body, and explain how repeated use, brain adaptation, cravings and withdrawal contribute to dependence and make stopping difficult.

3 STRENGTHEN DECISION-MAKING & COPING SKILLS

Evaluate how nicotine dependence can affect health, relationships, learning, finances and daily life, and apply practical strategies to manage cravings, alter routines and respond to challenges.

5 NAVIGATE SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Assess credible and confidential quitting resources and determine how to access and use appropriate supports for reducing, quitting or managing nicotine dependence.

2 BUILD SELF-AWARENESS & AUTONOMY

Examine how social and individual influences, triggers, routines and patterns can shape nicotine use, and consider how these factors may affect autonomy, values, goals and readiness for change.

4 DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE PEER SKILLS

Apply respectful, non-judgmental communication and peer-support strategies, recognize appropriate boundaries, and identify when and how to connect someone with additional support.

6 THINK CRITICALLY & REFLECT

Analyze and evaluate information, assumptions and influences related to nicotine use and addiction, and formulate informed perspectives using evidence, reasoning and thoughtful reflection.

The Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 supports Grades 11-12 students in developing the knowledge, awareness, and practical skills needed to understand nicotine dependence, make informed decisions, support others, and access help when needed.

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION



There is no formal Answer Key for Nicotine Exposé Kit 3. The first four activities are intentionally designed to invite reflection, interpretation, opinion and critical thinking, so student responses will naturally vary.

This page is intended to complement educators' professional judgment and assessment expertise by providing a consistent framework for reviewing student work. For each activity, it identifies the related learning objectives and suggests evidence to look for in students' responses, including understanding, reasoning, reflection, application and respectful engagement. Personal disclosure is never required.

1

More Than a Comic -
What a Cartoon Can Convey

Primary Objective: Think Critically & Reflect
Secondary Objective: Build Self-Awareness & Autonomy

What to look for:

- Interprets symbolism, hidden meaning, and the message being communicated.
- Analyzes how imagery or messaging may shape attitudes about nicotine and addiction.
- Supports interpretations with reasoning, examples, or evidence from the activity.

2

That's Not Freedom

Primary Objective: Understand Nicotine Dependence
Secondary Objective: Build Self-Awareness & Autonomy

What to look for:

- Explains themes of dependence, craving, withdrawal, and loss of control.
- Connects the text to how dependence can affect autonomy and daily life.
- Reflects thoughtfully on meaning & implications without requiring personal disclosure.

3

History Repeats: Selling Nicotine

Primary Objective: Think Critically & Reflect
Secondary Objective: Build Self-Awareness & Autonomy

What to look for:

- Analyzes industry messaging and tactics across time rather than simply describing them.
- Identifies influence, persuasion, or ethical concerns and considers impacts on young people.
- Uses evidence or examples to support conclusions about marketing, autonomy, and informed choice.

4

Exit the Vaping Experience

Primary Objective: Navigate Support & Resources
Secondary Objective: Develop Supportive Peer Skills

What to look for:

- Identifies credible, confidential quitting supports and explains how they can be accessed.
- Applies support options or strategies to realistic situations.
- Demonstrates respectful peer support and recognizes appropriate boundaries.

The Two Student Infographics

These can be presented and reviewed in class, but are primarily student information resources rather than assessed activities. They reinforce key messages visually, provide a shared reference for discussion, support different learning preferences, and give students information they can revisit independently.



REAL COMMENTS. HELPFUL RESPONSES.

You don't need the perfect response.

Calm, respectful conversations can help students feel heard, supported, and connected to accurate information and resources.



WHAT A STUDENT
MIGHT SAY



HELPFUL RESPONSES



REASONING

"It helps my anxiety."



- I can understand why that would make vaping seem helpful in the moment.
- Sometimes that calming feeling can be relief from nicotine withdrawal.
- What are some healthier ways to cope with anxiety or stress?

Acknowledges the student's experience without endorsing vaping or asking them to explain personal anxiety. Introduces withdrawal as one possible explanation and keeps the discussion informational rather than diagnostic.

"Everyone vapes."



- The people who vape may be more visible than the people who do not.
- What we notice around us does not always give us the full picture.
- School, friends and social media can influence what feels normal.

Acknowledges the perception while reinforcing that vaping is not universal and introduces social influence without asking the student to disclose their own peer or school experiences.

"I can quit anytime."



- Some signs of dependence can be difficult to notice at first.
- Cravings and withdrawal can make stopping harder than someone expects.
- Knowing what to look for can help someone understand when nicotine is becoming harder to control.

Provides information without challenging the student to prove they can quit or asking them to test themselves. It supports reflection without turning the conversation into an assessment of their nicotine use.

"Vaping is better than smoking."



- Being less harmful than smoking does not mean vaping is harmless.
- For young people, being nicotine-free avoids the risks of nicotine dependence.

Corrects the comparison without dismissing the student or framing the discussion as choosing between two products. It keeps the focus on accurate health information and nicotine dependence.

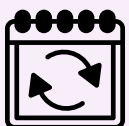
"My parents vape too."



- Seeing people close to you vape can make it feel familiar or normal.
- Adults can experience nicotine dependence too, and many find it difficult to quit.
- Everyone's experience with nicotine is different, and this discussion is not about judging anyone who uses it.

Acknowledges the family context without inviting the student to discuss or evaluate their parents' nicotine use. It keeps family members from becoming the subject of classroom analysis.

"I already tried quitting."



- Quitting nicotine can be difficult, and it may take more than one attempt.
- Quit attempts can offer useful lessons and a more informed path forward.
- Support is available whenever someone wants to explore what might help.

Acknowledges a person's effort without asking anyone to describe what happened during a previous quit attempt in front of the class. It reinforces hope and makes support visible without pressure.

BEFORE YOU GO...

CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND EDUCATOR FEEDBACK



Nicotine **Exposé** Kit 3 Quitting Nicotine

Nicotine **Exposé** Kit **2** Grade 9 & 10

Nicotine **Exposé** Kit **1** Grade 7 & 8

Vaping: The **EX** Files GR 4-6

NICOTINE EXPOSÉ KIT 3 IS ONE PART OF A BROADER RESPONSE.

Education is most effective when it is reinforced by supportive school environments, consistent policies, trusted adults, families, health services, and accessible quitting supports.

No single lesson or resource can address nicotine dependence on its own. Accurate information, opportunities for reflection, supportive conversations, and connections to appropriate help can strengthen prevention, reduce stigma, and support students who may already be using nicotine or considering change.



HELP US IMPROVE THESE RESOURCES

Your experience using Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 with students is valuable. After using the resource, please take a few minutes to complete our short educator feedback form. Your feedback will help us understand how the materials work in real classrooms, identify areas for improvement, and guide the development of future vaping and nicotine education resources.

We welcome feedback on:

- Student engagement and response
- Ease of classroom implementation
- Usefulness of the activities and supports
- Areas that could be strengthened or clarified
- Additional resources educators would find helpful



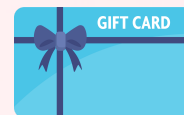
Educator Feedback Form

Scan the QR code or use the link below after using Nicotine Exposé Kit 3 in the classroom.

<https://forms.gle/HtUjP4zhkefHXXLr9>

Share your thoughts for a chance to win!

Teachers who complete a feedback form will be entered into an annual draw for one of three \$100 Amazon gift cards, courtesy of ACT.



Thank You