

An illustration featuring a hand holding a lit cigarette on the right, with smoke rising from it. Below the cigarette is a red starburst shape. On the left, a yellow speech bubble with a white border contains the text. The background is dark grey with some orange and yellow rays in the top left corner.

VAPING, NICOTINE, AND CANNABIS

MYTH BUSTING



MYTH: "Vaping is basically harmless. It's just water vapor."

FACT: Vape aerosol contains nicotine, heavy metals, and chemicals linked to serious lung damage. It is not water vapor.



WHY THIS MATTERS

The adolescent brain is still developing until age 25. Nicotine and cannabis affect that development differently than they affect adult brains. Early exposure to nicotine changes how your brain responds to reward, making addiction easier to develop and harder to break.





NICOTINE & VAPING

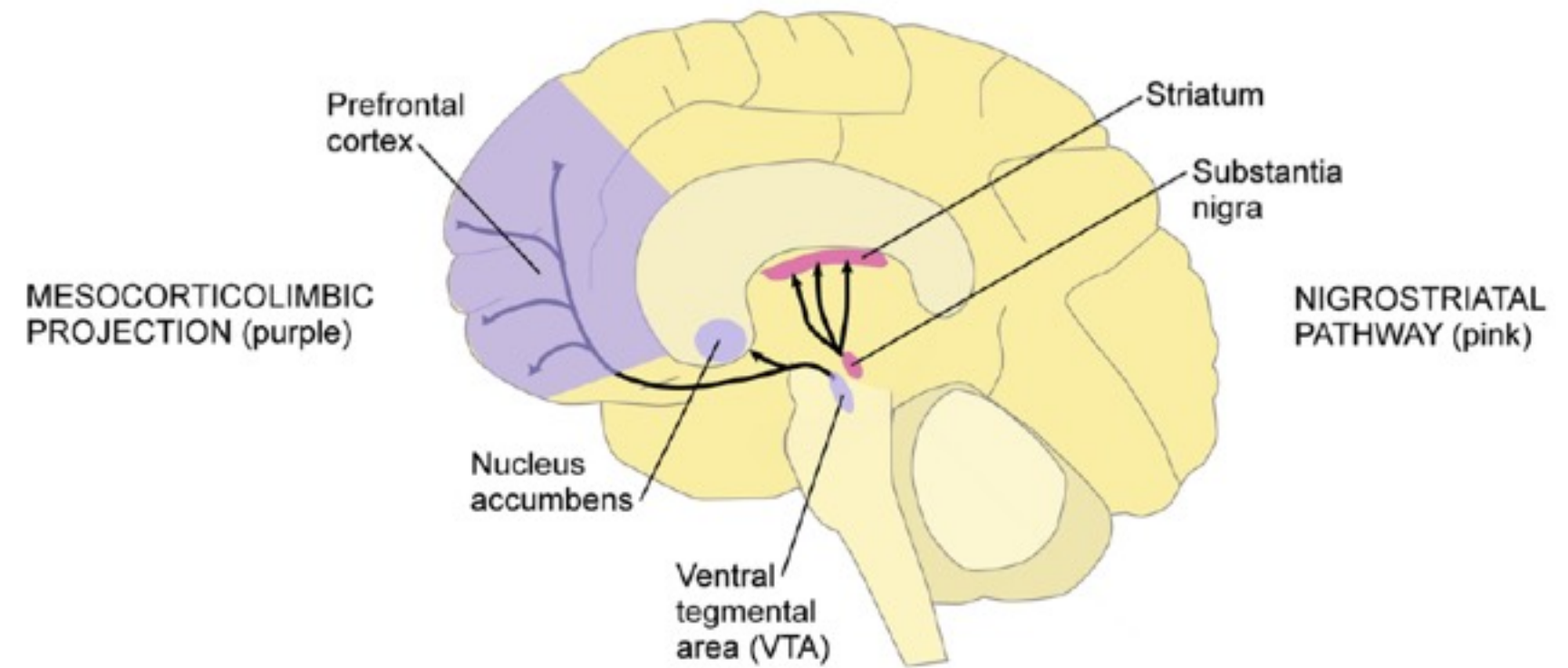
What's in vape aerosol:

- Nicotine (highly addictive)
- Formaldehyde and acetaldehyde (chemical irritants)
- Heavy metals: lead, nickel, tin
- Ultrafine particles (penetrate deep into lungs)

EVALI: E-cigarette or Vaping-Associated Lung Injury

- Linked to Vitamin E acetate in some products
- Caused hospitalizations and deaths in 2019–2020

HOW NICOTINE ADDICTION WORKS



ADDICTION PATHWAY

Nicotine → floods brain with dopamine → feels good Brain adapts → needs nicotine to feel normal Without it → irritability, anxiety, difficulty concentrating This cycle is dependence — not a character flaw

Teen brains are especially vulnerable:

- Nicotine reshapes the developing reward system
- Increases risk of anxiety and depression long-term
- Makes other addictions easier to develop

CANNABIS



What cannabis does:

- THC activates the brain's endocannabinoid system
- Short-term: relaxation, altered perception, impaired short-term memory and reaction time
- Heavy teen use linked to: memory issues, lower motivation, increased anxiety and psychosis risk (especially with high-THC products)

The THC issue:

- Cannabis today is 3–5x stronger than in the 1990s
- High-THC concentrates (wax, dabs) can exceed 70–90% THC
- More potency = higher risk for younger users



SOCIAL PRESSURE & MYTHS

Myth

"Vaping is just water vapor"

"You can quit anytime"

"Weed isn't addictive"

"Cannabis is natural so it's safe"

"Everyone does it"

Fact

Contains nicotine, metals, and chemical irritants

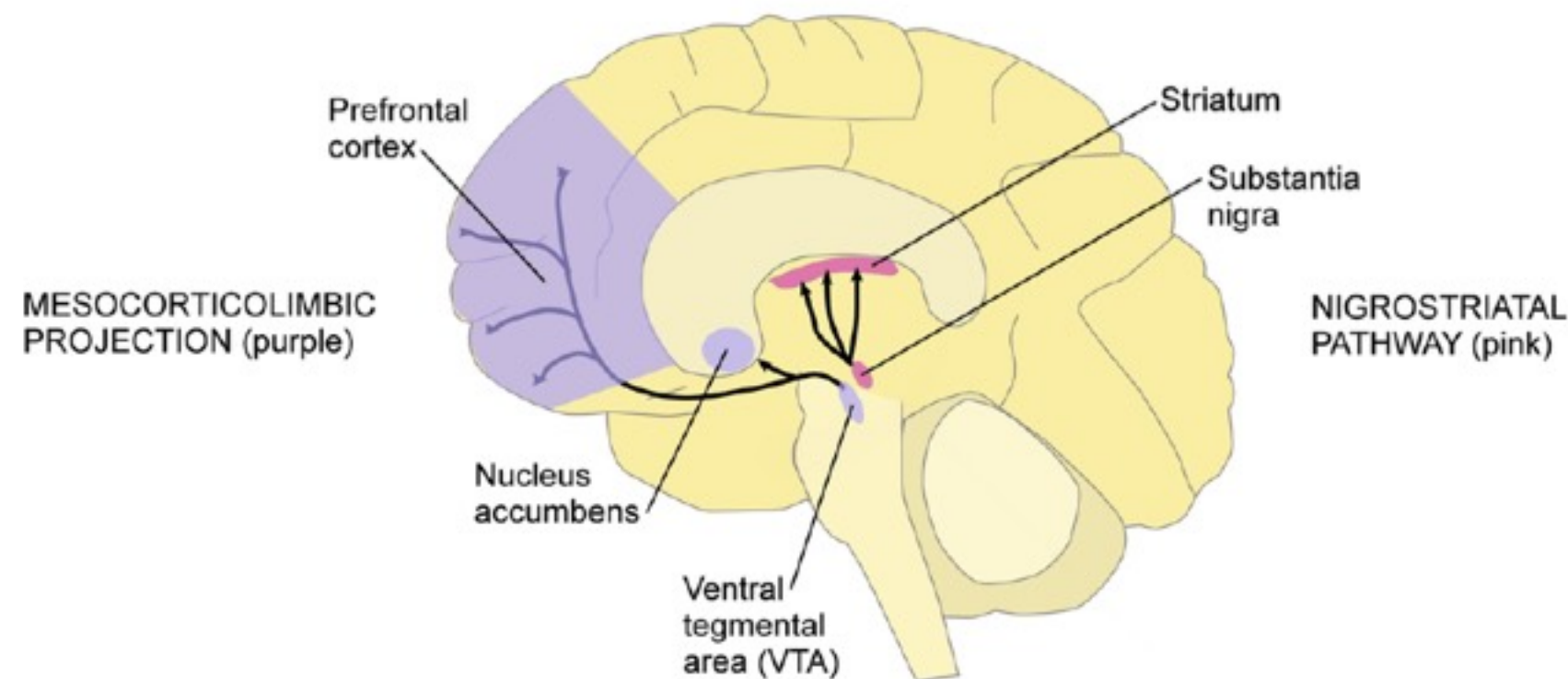
Nicotine addiction develops fast and is genuinely hard to break

~9% of users develop cannabis use disorder; higher in teens

Potency has increased dramatically; natural $\neq$ harmless

Most teens don't vape daily — the perception of universality is a social pressure tool

HARM REDUCTION



If you or someone you know uses:

- Avoid high-THC concentrates (lower potency = lower risk)
- Don't mix cannabis with alcohol (amplifies impairment significantly)
- Avoid using alone and in unsafe settings
- Never drive after use
- If quitting nicotine: NRT (nicotine replacement therapy) is available OTC and works

For quitting vaping: Text "QUIT" to 47848 (Smokefree Teen)