

VAPING – NICOTINE ADDICTION

Vaping and nicotine addiction in young people can be challenging. The information below is designed to help you understand the harms of vaping and recognise signs of nicotine addiction in your young person. It also provides information to support and navigate this issue.

Vaping harms your health

Vapes (e-cigarettes) contain harmful chemicals. NSW Health has tested vapes used by young people and found that they contain high levels of nicotine and other harmful substances. Some of these chemicals have been shown to be harmful to health and can cause cancer, heart disease and lung damage.

Vaping is linked to a range of health harms, including:



Breathlessness



Nicotine addiction
(also called dependence)



Nicotine poisoning



Throat irritation



Cough



Dizziness



Headaches



Nausea



Serious burns



Increased likelihood of taking up tobacco smoking

Why do young people vape?

Vapes are marketed to appeal to young people and come in attractive packaging, including colours, and a range of flavours.

Research has shown that young people start vaping due to flavours and taste, for relaxation and stress relief and vaping is seen as a socially acceptable behaviour among peers.

Understanding the reasons why a young person vapes can help you to frame your conversations with them, and how to best support them.

Tips to have a conversation with a young person about vaping

Here are some tips to approach this topic:

- Try to start the conversation in a relaxed easy-going way, perhaps taking the cue from around you – e.g. a note from school, a news story about vaping, or seeing people vaping on the street. Have your facts ready.
- Ask what they need, if they would like your help and how you can best support them.
- Understand how much your young person knows about vaping harms and risks.
- Help them think about the impact vapes have on their health and wellbeing, such as focus at school, sporting ability, academic performance and social interactions.
- Consider asking questions like: 'What made you want to try?' and 'How did it make you feel when you first tried vaping?' and 'How do you feel about it now?' so that you can understand their motivation and start identifying possible solutions.

Your GP or Quitline can provide tailored advice on how to support your young person who vapes and may be nicotine addicted.

For more information to assist in having these conversations, visit health.nsw.gov.au/vaping.





Most vapes contain nicotine

Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances in the world and is an ingredient in both tobacco and the liquid in vapes. Nicotine addiction can develop quickly. The more a person vapes (or smokes), the more their brain and body get used to nicotine, which is what makes people keep vaping and smoking. The amount of nicotine in vapes varies. How much nicotine someone receives depends on the type of vape, the concentration of nicotine in the vape, and how deeply and frequently someone inhales.

A young person's brain is still developing until they are around 25 years old. Regularly using nicotine vapes can cause changes to a young person's brain development. This affects their learning, concentration, mood and memory. It can also increase feelings of stress and worsen depression and anxiety. Exposing young brains to nicotine early can rewire the brain to be more addicted to substances into adulthood. You don't have to vape daily to experience these negative impacts of nicotine.

Understanding nicotine addiction

When someone becomes addicted to nicotine, their brain and body start to need nicotine to feel satisfied and work normally. But the effect of nicotine wears off very quickly, which can trigger another craving to vape (or smoke).

Signs that a young person may be addicted to nicotine can include:

- Vaping soon after they wake up in the morning (within 30 minutes).
- Always taking their vape with them when they leave the house.
- Vaping more during times of high stress.
- Wanting to buy a new vape quickly when they lose or finish their current one.
- Having poor concentration or being in a bad mood when they can't vape.
- Continuing to vape even though they have been in trouble for vaping at school, home or work.

Recognising nicotine withdrawal can help you support a young person who vapes

When someone first stops vaping, they can experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms which is temporary and isn't dangerous. Nicotine withdrawal can happen within the first few hours because when someone is addicted to nicotine and they go without vaping (or smoking), the nicotine level in their bloodstream drops.

This can cause unpleasant physical symptoms, increased anxiety, being irritable and strong urges to vape, known as cravings. After someone quits, the physical withdrawal symptoms usually get better after the first 1-2 weeks.

But the psychological craving to vape can last longer as their brain adapts and re-learns how to function without having nicotine.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include:



Being **down** or **irritable**.



Being **unable** to **concentrate** or think clearly.



Feeling **anxious**, **restless** or **jittery**.



Not being able to **sleep** well.



Feeling **more hungry** than usual.



Not being able to **focus** on things apart from **vaping**.

Where to get help

If you think a young person might be addicted to vaping, there is help available.

See your GP, youth health services or other health services for help with quitting vaping.

You can also call the [Quitline](https://www.quitline.org.au) on **13 7848**.



Do you know what they're vaping?

Get the evidence* and facts at health.nsw.gov.au/vaping

*All statements are backed by evidence which can be found on the website

