

Vaping

What are vapes?

Vapes (also called e-cigarettes, vape pens and pods) can vary in shape, size and colour, but they all work the same way. Vapes contain a liquid (also known as e-liquid or e-juice) that is heated to become an aerosol, which the person then inhales¹.

When someone uses a vape, they can inhale over 200 harmful chemicals². Vape labels may be wrong or incomplete. Even when nicotine is not listed as an ingredient on the label many vapes contain high levels of nicotine, which is addictive¹. Some vapes have been found to contain toxic chemicals that are known to harm health³.



Do many young people vape?

While most young people don't vape, the use of vapes is quickly increasing in Australia among all age groups, especially among young people⁴. Recent research in NSW found that 16% of 14-17 year olds had vaped in the last month⁵, and 32% had ever tried a vape. Health experts are worried vaping is becoming more common among young people, which is increasing the risk of nicotine addiction and harm from other chemicals found in vapes.

Why do people vape?

Young people may start vaping due to⁶⁻⁸:

- Curiosity
- To fit in or look cool
- The taste and flavours
- To quit smoking



Key health messages



Vapes have many chemicals in them that can harm your health, including some that have been linked to cancer, heart disease and lung damage.



Vapes can make you more likely to take up cigarette smoking.



There are no rules about what goes into vapes and labels can be wrong or incomplete.



Using vapes can cause nicotine addiction, breathing problems, nausea. Long term, they may cause other illnesses, we just don't know yet.

Can vaping cause harm?

Yes. Vapes can harm our health in many ways. Most vapes contain nicotine, which is one of the most addictive drugs in the world. When young people use nicotine, it can lead to changes to brain development, memory and attention problems, mood changes and the potential to worsen stress and increase depression and anxiety⁹. Those who vape but don't smoke are also three times more likely to start smoking compared to those who have never vaped¹⁰. Importantly, as vaping is relatively new, we don't know the long-term health effects¹⁰.

Other health effects of vaping may include¹⁰⁻¹³:

Vaping effects

- Coughing
- Breathing problems
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Burns and injury (from the vape overheating or exploding)
- Nicotine poisoning
- Nicotine addiction (dependence)
- Nicotine withdrawal (anxiety, irritability, low mood, stress when not able to vape)
- Severe lung damage, that can be life-threatening.

Is vaping legal?

It is illegal to sell vapes (and all other tobacco products) to anyone under 18 years old. It is also illegal to sell nicotine vapes in retail shops such as convenience stores and tobacconists. Nicotine vapes are only allowed to be sold by pharmacies if you have a prescription from a doctor and are over 18 years old.

Vaping is not allowed anywhere smoking is banned. This includes in enclosed public spaces such as on public transport and schools, and some outdoor spaces, such as swimming pools and dining areas.

Vaping

True or false?

It's just water vapour ➔ **False**, when heated, vape liquids create an aerosol which contains many chemicals like nicotine (the main addictive ingredient in tobacco) and diacetyl (linked to lung disease) and you breathe in these particles when you vape¹⁴.

I can be sure my vape is nicotine-free ➔ **False**, labels on vapes are often incomplete or incorrect. Many vapes that are labelled as nicotine-free were found to contain nicotine when tested¹⁴.

Vaping nicotine-free vapes is safe ➔ **False**, nicotine-free vapes still contain many harmful chemicals that have been linked to lung damage, heart disease and cancer¹⁴.

Once I'm hooked, I'm hooked forever ➔ **False**, it's never too late to quit. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms such as cravings are strongest in the first week. For most people, these will fade over 2-4 weeks. Having support to quit from a doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker will increase the chance of successfully quitting.

Vaping can help me feel more relaxed when I'm feeling tense or stressed ➔ **False**. Although many young people believe that vaping has positive mental health benefits, there is no evidence that vaping improves your mental health. In fact vaping has been associated with mental health problems anxiety and depression¹⁵.

What if I want to know more?

health.nsw.gov.au/vaping - information about vaping and links to support services

yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/e-cigarettes.aspx - easy-to-read information for young people about vaping and nicotine addiction.

lungfoundation.com.au/lung-health/protecting-your-lungs/e-cigarettes-and-vaping/ - resources for young people about vapes and vaping.

Where can I get help to quit?

- **Have a yarn with your doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker**
- **Call Quitline on 13 7848**
– a free and confidential phone service (you can ask to speak to an Aboriginal counsellor if you wish).
- **ICanQuit website**
– visit www.icanquit.com.au to create your own quit plan.
- **QuitTxt**
– visit www.quit.org.au/quittxt, they can send you messages to stay on track.

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