

# Vaping factsheet



## What is vaping?

Vaping is the inhaling (breathing in) of vapour created by an electronic device that can be known as a vape, e-cigarette or electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS).

Vapes work by heating a liquid (called an e-liquid/e-juice). The liquid typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine and flavourings, some of which may be potentially harmful to the body. When heated, the nicotine changes into a vapour. The nicotine and other ingredients are inhaled into the body.

Vapes come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours. Some can be disguised as items including pens and USB memory sticks.

While they are being used by some smokers as a quit aid or harm reduction product, there are an increasing number of young people vaping who are non-smokers. There has been a rapid increase in the use, availability and promotion of vaping devices.

**The health advice is clear: young people and people who have never smoked should not vape.**

## What does the law say?

Vapes are an age restricted product. It is illegal to sell a vape to someone who is under 18 and to purchase a vape for someone who is under 18 years old.

For any nicotine containing e-liquid the maximum legal limit of nicotine is 20mg/ml. At this concentration 1ml of e-liquid is roughly equivalent to smoking **20 cigarettes**. A device containing 20mg/ml liquid may say 2% nicotine. For disposable vapes the tank size must not exceed 2ml, which roughly equates to **600 puffs**.

However, there are a variety of vapes being sold which are unregulated (illegal). These may contain higher levels of nicotine than the permitted 20mg/ml and disposable vapes are being sold which contain more than 600 puffs. The content of these unregulated vapes isn't known and they may have serious health implications.



VAPING  
ADDICTION  
SOON TAKES  
HOLD OF  
YOU

## Why do young people vape?

There are a number of things that could motivate young people to vape, such as peer pressure/influence, social image and perceived lower health risks of vapes compared with cigarettes.

Other common reasons reported include to support their mental health, reduce stress levels and address low self-esteem. Vapes are used as a perceived coping mechanism to address these issues. However, young people who vape for stress relief report significantly higher stress levels than those who don't vape.

Young people's brains are still developing, so they can't always think through the consequences of the things they do. This means they're more likely to try things like vaping out of curiosity or 'for fun' without considering the harm they could be doing to themselves. Vapes are colourful and come in lots of different flavours, which can seem appealing to young people. They don't seem scary or harmful, as cigarettes do.

## Why is there concern about vaping among young people?

Although vaping is less harmful than smoking, we don't yet fully understand the long-term effects vaping has on our health. Evidence shows that e-cigarettes or vapes are not harm-free.

Vaping liquids can contain high levels of nicotine. The amount of nicotine you inhale from a vape can vary. Many young people who vape did not smoke cigarettes before they started vaping. But young people who vape are more likely to start smoking cigarettes than those who never vape.

The nicotine contained in vapes is **harmfully addictive**. Research on smoking has shown that nicotine addiction can affect your mental health. It can make you tired, and stressed, affect your concentration and impact your ability to learn and study. It can also lead to or increase depression and anxiety.

Vaping can contain other **harmful illicit substances** besides nicotine. High levels of THC or synthetic cannabinoids such as Spice or Pine could be present and have a negative outcome when vaped. Sharing vapes could lead to young people inhaling illicit substances without realising.

In addition, there is growing concern over the **environmental impacts** of disposable vapes given their lithium batteries and hard to recycle components and the increasing frequency in which these products are littered or thrown in the bin.



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