



The Facts about Vaping: Information for Parents

Schools are a smoke-free environment which includes an environment free from tobacco and e-cigarettes. The Department of Education recognises that exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is a proven health hazard. Smoke-free workplaces provide workers, students and visitors with a safe and healthy working and learning environment, protecting health and decrease their risk of developing smoking related illnesses.

Electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes, often called *vapes* are electronic devices designed to deliver vapourised liquids into the lungs. There are many different styles of vapes available and they can be difficult to spot because they often resemble common school items like highlighter pens, markers and USB drives. This also makes them easy to conceal. Knowing the different shapes and types of vapes is the first step to help protect young people from risks of vaping.



Disposable vapes are the most common vapes used by young people. They can contain between 300 to over 4000 *puffs* in each device. They often range in price from \$15 to \$50 depending on the number of puffs the device contains. Many of these vapes contain nicotine despite often not being labelled as containing nicotine.



Vapes can also come in pod-style or refillable devices where the user refills the device with e-liquids or new pods containing e-liquids. These devices don't seem to be as popular with young people.



Vapes appeal to young people



Vapes appeal to young people because the flavours (such as watermelon, grape, caramel, bubble gum, vanilla and mint) and colourful packaging used for vapes make them appealing to young people. This together with the fact that many vapes also contain nicotine, which young people can become addicted to very quickly. Tobacco companies are continuously looking for new customers and vapes are a new way to get young people addicted to nicotine which is often difficult to quit.

The biggest misunderstanding about vapes is that they are harmless compared to cigarettes. This is not true. **Vapes are not safe.**

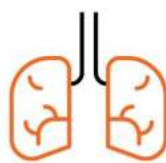
The main ingredients in vapes is propylene, vegetable glycerine or glycerol, and they often also contain nicotine, flavours and other chemicals. Vapes may contain harmful chemicals that aren't listed on the pack.



Many vapes contain nicotine making them **very addictive**. The nicotine in 1 cape can = **50 cigarettes**



Young people who vape are **3 times as likely** to take up smoking



Vaping has been linked to **serious lung disease**



Vapes can contain the same **harmful chemicals** found in cleansing products, nail polish remover, weed killer and bug spray

How big is the problem?

As you may be aware the uptake of vaping by young people is increasing. Research shows that in WA, 13.5% of school students aged 12 to 17 years have tried an e-cigarette. Of those who had tried 2 out of 3 (66%) had not used one

Risks to physical and mental health



Nicotine is highly addictive for young brains and can cause **long-lasting effects on brain development**. Nicotine changes the way brain synapses are formed in young people. The impacts can include impaired attention, learning, memory and changes in mood.

Vapes also expose young people to chemical and toxin levels that have the potential to cause negative health effects. Vapes can leave a younger person at increasing risk of **depression and anxiety** and has been linked to **serious lung disease**.



Many of the long-term harms of vaping are still unknown. The liquid in vapes and the vapour is not water. As well as containing harmful chemicals, vapes can expose young people to toxins such as formaldehyde and heavy metals, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled into the lungs and flavouring chemicals such as diacetyl which is a chemical linked to serious lung disease.

Vapes have even been known to explode causing serious burns. The Department of Mines received a report of an incident at a mine site where **an electronic cigarette battery spontaneously ignited** in a worker's pocket while he was travelling in a utility with two other workers. The report is consistent with reports of other e-cigarette device spontaneous combustion events.



The statements received with the report describe a combustion event not unlike fireworks going off and flying around the inside of the vehicle the workers were travelling in. The worker received severe burns to his leg. The cause of the explosion is known as a *thermal runaway* which refers to the very rapid discharge of the battery which occurs when the battery overheats to dangerously high temperatures, resulting in inner fire and explosion and chemical thermal burns to the user.

E-cigarettes contain interchangeable parts often including extra-low voltage lithium batteries and the danger with them is, therefore, the risk of overcharging and overheating of the batteries, causing them the devices to ignite or explode in close proximity to the user.

The laws around selling vapes in WA

It is reported that young people often purchase vapes online, from retail stores or from friends and contacts in the community. However, it is illegal in WA to sell e-cigarette devices and nicotine vaping products to anyone regardless of age, unless they are prescribed by a doctor for smoking cessation purposes and obtained with a prescription from a pharmacy.

In WA e-cigarette devices and their components, whether or not they contain nicotine, cannot be sold by tobacco or general retailers. It is also illegal to sell vapes to friends at school or in the community. If you suspect someone is selling vapes or e-cigarettes and their components, you can report it to the Department of Health by emailing TobaccoPolicy@health.wa.gov.au.

Is your child vaping?



You may not know your child is vaping as vapes are small, resemble common items and are also not easy to smell. Tell-tale **signs that your child may be vaping include the symptoms of nicotine addiction** such as your child feeling irritable or anxious. If your child is vaping encourage them to stop and let them know that help is available and that you are there for them.

Stopping vaping can sometimes be hard and your child may need advice from a GP. It also helps to set a good example by being tobacco and vape-free yourself.

The importance of talking to your child



If you suspect your child is vaping, take the time to talk to them about it and help them to understand all of the risks. As vaping is often common in schools, they may see it as a normal or safe thing to do, but that is not the case. **It is important to let your child know the risks of vaping.** Try to start the conversation with your child in a relaxed easy-going way, perhaps taking the cue from around you, such as a note from school, a news story about it or seeing someone vaping on the street. And have your acts ready.

Information and support

- Quitline is a telephone based service, offering information and advice. Quitline counsellors are available to answer any questions you may have about e-cigarettes on 13 7848 (13 QUIT). Quitline counsellors provide tips and strategies and help you plan your quit attempts based on your own needs and preferences.
- For information about the laws regarding e-cigarettes, visit [Healthy WA](#).
- The *Make Smoking History* campaign based at the Council of the Australian Capital Territory provides information about quitting smoking. Visit makesmokinghistory.org.au.