

Vaping: A Guide for Parents and Carers



As parents and carers, we want to do all that we can to protect our children and encourage them to make safe choices. Whether a child has not tried vaping, has already begun to vape or vapes regularly, this guide can help you learn what vaping is, why it appeals to young people, what the health risks are and what you can do to protect young people from its harm.

Vaping is the use of an electronic device to inhale vapour derived from a heated liquid. You may have heard them also be referred to as e-cigarettes. Vapes should be viewed as a tool for quitting smoking only. Like nicotine patches and gum, vapes containing nicotine are a popular aid for quitting smoking as they can help to reduce the intensity of the cravings that smokers get when they give up. Vapes are not available on the NHS and are not recommended for non-smokers, particularly children and young people.



The Appeal of Vaping

Vapes are very attractive to young people due to their appearance and low cost. They are available in many different colours and flavours. When we asked local young people in Glasgow why they vaped, some of their answers were:

It calms me down. I would get angry and that would make me feel calmer

I liked the taste of them

It was a trend and I felt pressured into it

They're cool....everyone is doing it right now

Harms of Vaping

The main ingredients in e-cigarette liquids are vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol, but most also contain nicotine as well as small amounts of flavourings and sweeteners.

Some traces of toxic chemicals have been found in some vape products, although generally in much lower levels than tobacco cigarettes.

Nicotine Addiction

Nicotine is a stimulant drug which is highly addictive. Nicotine can harm adolescent and young adult brain development, which continues maturing up to the age of 25. Using nicotine from a young age can harm the parts of the brain that influence:

- Concentration levels
- Learning ability
- Mood
- Impulse control

There is strong evidence that vapes create a new route into smoking for young people.

Short and Long Term Health Harms

- Recent studies suggest that vapes can negatively impact heart and lung health.
- There are increasing reports of severe lung illness related to using vapes.
- Other common side effects reported include dry cough, shortness of breath and headaches.
- There is not enough long term evidence available to know the long term harms.



Safety Concerns

Vapes often contain a lithium-ion battery which can cause safety concerns if not used and disposed of properly.

- Lithium-ion batteries should be protected against being damaged, immersed in water, exposed to excessive heat or brought into close contact with metal items such as coins and keys. This is because there is a risk of short circuit, explosion or fire.
- There are increasing reports from hospitals of children accidentally swallowing liquid nicotine from e-cigarette refills - this poses a risk of poisoning.




Legislation

- Vapes often contain nicotine, therefore, within Scotland, they are an age restricted product. This means it is illegal to sell the devices to anyone under the age of 18 or to buy them on their behalf.
- There are restrictions on the strengths of the e-liquid and the size of the tank. The e-liquid has a legal maximum strength of 20mg/ml of nicotine and the tank should be no larger than 2ml in size.
- Recent reports have shown increased levels of counterfeit vapes within the market. These counterfeits are more likely to pose safety concern risks.
- If you are worried about a shop selling vapes to young people or selling counterfeit products, you can report it to Trading Standards for further investigation.



 www.tsscot.co.uk



- Unlike cigarettes, certain forms of vaping promotion is still permitted. However, adverts should not be targeted towards children and young people. If you are concerned about this you can report it to The Advertising Standards Authority  www.asa.org.uk



The Environment

If not disposed of correctly, vapes can cause harm to the environment through multiple different pathways. These include:

- Toxic and hazardous waste from the nicotine and other chemicals which can leak into the environment and are lethal to wildlife.
- Single use plastics, which are often found in the cartridges, are poorly recyclable and non-biodegradable.
- A lithium-ion battery to power the vape. These require specific waste management protocols and if disposed of in general waste, pose a fire hazard.



Vapes should be disposed of at small waste electrical or electronic equipment sites. These can be found at local household waste recycling centres. Many local shops and retailers will also provide facilities to recycle vapes.



You can find your nearest electrical waste disposal site here:

 <https://www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk>




How Can We Protect Young People?

It's important that you can speak openly to your child about vaping. Parents and carers are encouraged to approach vapes like any other age-restricted product such as cigarettes or alcohol. Below are some tips to help you with these conversations:

- Discourage experimentation of vaping. Speak openly about vaping so if your child feels pressured to try it, they feel comfortable coming to you for advice.
- Take opportunities to provide clear and accurate information on the risks of vaping, including that some long term risks remain unclear.
- Take opportunities to provide accurate and clear information on the dangers of nicotine and how it is a highly addictive substance that can affect a child's brain development.
- Encourage your child to make safe choices and discuss ways to respond if your child ever feels pressured to try vaping.
- If you think your child might be vaping, try to stay calm and discuss it with them. Listen to them and use this as an opportunity to understand why they have felt the desire to vape.
- Know the facts - this can help ensure that you respond in a supportive way and that discussions around vaping don't turn into arguments.



Getting Help and Support

If you have concerns, please contact Quit Your Way Scotland on  **0800 84 84 84** for advice.

Useful websites

Please visit the websites below or scan the QR codes for further information.

NHS inform

 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/stopping-smoking/how-to-stop/vapes-e-cigarettes>



Parent Club Presentation

 <https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/information-and-facts-about-vaping>



ASH Scotland

 <https://ashscotland.org.uk/get-support/working-with-young-people/young-people-vaping/>

