

# Vaping and Young People

## For Parents and Carers

While it's true that tobacco smoking has fallen out of favour amongst Australia's youth in recent years, they're also taking up an increasingly popular and dangerous alternative: 'vaping'.

This resource was created to fill the knowledge gap around vaping and e-cigarettes, empowering parents and carers with the latest research and information to engage in meaningful conversations with their dependents about the potential harms.

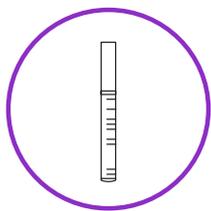
As Australia's most trusted lung health charity, Lung Foundation Australia remains deeply concerned about the large and avoidable burden of disease resulting from vaping and e-cigarettes amongst young people, and encourages parents and carers to help dissuade this harmful activity.

The resource offers evidence-based information on vaping, its health, safety and legal issues in Australia, and the ways in which it presents a serious health risk to the body and lungs.

### What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of smoking e-cigarettes, or 'vapes', which are lithium battery-powered devices that look like metallic pens, USBs and other hand-held systems. Vapes use cartridges filled with liquids, or 'juice', which typically contain nicotine, artificial flavorings, and various chemicals. The liquid is heated into an aerosol, or vapour, and inhaled into the user's lungs.

Vapes generally come in three main types: Minis, Closed Pods, and Refillables. The range of choices within these categories has evolved rapidly in recent years, with countless new models and liquid flavours available.



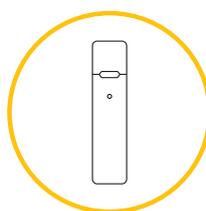
**Minis** – also known as 'cigalikes', Cuvides, BIDI Sticks or Stif. These are made to look like a normal cigarette and are disposable.



**Refillable systems** – also known as Mods, Tanks or APVs. These are newer models with more settings and longer battery life. The vape juice is re-filled into the device's tank.



**Closed pod e-cigs** – these look like minis, but aren't disposable. The liquid 'pod' is replaced with another when it runs out.



**Other brands** – there are also some closed pod brands such as JUUL which can be charged in a USB slot.

**Non-nicotine systems can be just as harmful due to the toxins they use, which though safe to ingest, may be very unsafe to inhale. Additionally, these products lack proper testing, and often still contain nicotine even if they claim to be free of it.**

## Attraction for young people

Young people are drawn to vaping for a number of different reasons. The devices themselves are a novelty:

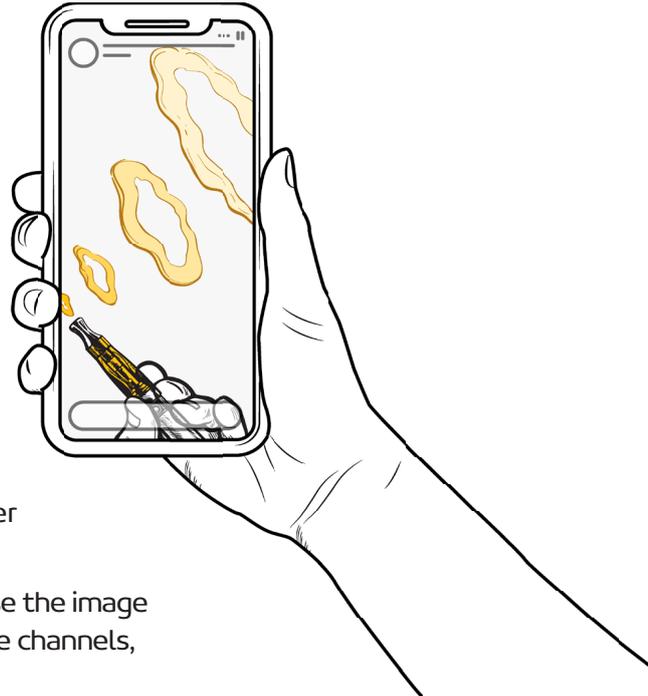
- Bright in colour
- Look like a toy
- Small and easy to hide.

If a parent or close family member vapes, this often creates an in-road, as does an incorrect perception that vaping is relatively harmless – particularly when compared to regular cigarettes. All this makes vaping attractive to young people who have grown up in an age where the damage caused by tobacco products is known.

There are many different flavours of vape liquid on the market today including mango, peppermint, vanilla and beyond, all of which smell and taste a lot more appealing than combusive tobacco.

Accessibility and affordability remain key factors too – though the purchase of vapes are restricted in Australia, vape equipment can easily be obtained online, and makes for a cheaper option than cigarettes.

The tobacco industry also uses sophisticated marketing to glamourise the image of these products and their use through social media and other online channels, without properly communicating the health risks.



## Health risks and harms



Vaping is unsafe for young people. The long-term health effects are still relatively unknown but what we do know is that vaping is associated with side-effects such as nausea, vomiting, mouth and airway irritation, chest pain and palpitations.



One common vaping misconception is that it's harmless water vapour - in fact, vapes emit an aerosol made up of tiny toxic particles. While this aerosol might contain less chemical additives than combustible tobacco products, it still contains a lot of harmful compounds. An Australian study into flavoured vape juice unveiled that the toxic particles within these liquids can include:

- Formaldehyde and acrolein, which can cause irreversible lung damage
- Propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin, which are toxic to human cells
- Nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm the still developing adolescent brain, particularly in areas that control attention, learning, mood, and behavioural control.



Vaping is associated with the future uptake of cigarette smoking, and can be considered a 'gateway' to further risk and health complications.



# Talking with your dependent about vaping

## Just the facts

The first step before bringing anything up is to know the facts. Arm yourself with accurate, verifiable and current information and go from there.

## Self-reflection

As a parent or caregiver, the best possible thing you can do is set a positive example. Consider your own smoking and related behaviours before discussing theirs, and bring maximum honesty and candidness to your conversations.

## Assumption and judgement

Never assume, and never judge – this almost always leads to a lack of trust and openness, and will probably have a counterproductive effect (or possibly make matters worse).

## Timing

Choose your timing wisely, perhaps during a relaxed moment at home, when driving somewhere together, or when no other stress or distractions are present.

## Be ready to listen

With patience, open up to your young person with calmness, ready to listen to what they have to say, without jumping in too fast to correct or sway them.

**Above all, make sure they recognise how much you care about them: that the conversation is coming from a place of complete unconditional love, support and concern for their wellbeing.**

**Discuss the issues at play, particularly the health risks, and have a few options for them to get more information or assistance if they need it.**

**Keep the conversation going, keep building trust, and support them in any way they need.**



# Additional resources and support services

Organisation	Resource
Australian Drug Foundation	<a href="#">Vaping amongst young people</a>
Australian Government Department of Health	<a href="#">About e-cigarettes</a>
healthdirect	<a href="#">E-cigarettes - Vaping</a>
Department of Education and Training Policy and Advisory Library	<a href="#">Smoking and Vaping Ban</a>
Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association	<a href="#">The Law</a>
Cancer Council NSW	<a href="#">E-Cigarettes - What you need to know as parents</a>
The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne	<a href="#">E-cigarettes and teens</a>
NSW Health	<a href="#">E-cigarettes and young people</a>
Truth Initiative	<a href="#">Vaping Lingo Dictionary</a>



**This fact sheet has been developed as part of a suite of vaping resources. Additional fact sheets for educators, teens, and young adults are also available. To find out more and to access information and support, contact Lung Foundation Australia.**

Call 1800 654 301  
Visit [lungfoundation.com.au](http://lungfoundation.com.au)  
Email [enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au](mailto:enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au)

## References

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-28/selling-vaping-to-teenagers-at-epiemic-levels/11452036>
- <https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-harm-reduction/indepth-18b-e-cigarettes/18b-3-extent>
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- <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/principals-sound-alarm-as-students-take-up-vaping-become-black-market-dealers-20200703-p558vv.html>
- <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/vaping-a-harmless-alternative-or-a-dangerous-gateway-tp-smoking-20200702-p558e7.html>