



Australian Government

**GIVE UP
FOR GOOD**



Escape the vape:

**a conversation guide for
parents and carers**

LET'S JOIN THE THOUSANDS

QUITTING VAPES

Introduction

Young people and vaping

One in three teenagers have tried vaping, and about one in five are currently vaping. Today's 14–24-year-olds are the first generation to be exposed to nicotine largely through vaping rather than cigarettes.

We know both short and long-term vaping is dangerous to your health.

Research has found most vapes sold in Australia contain nicotine – even when the packaging says they don't.

They can also contain untested and unsafe chemicals, including flavours.



1 in 3

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Introduction



How to use this guide

This guide will help you approach the topic of vaping with your child or a young person you care about.

Having a conversation about vaping might feel tricky, but it's important to do – it's a conversation that could change their life for the better.

When using this guide, ensure you consider how your own behaviour may impact your child and how the family environment can influence a young person's behaviour.

Research has shown children whose parents vape are 64 per cent more likely to vape and if a parent currently smokes, their child's likelihood of smoking increases by 193 per cent.

Get ready to:

Listen and talk without judgement.

Be curious and interested in your child's thoughts and feelings.

Provide a safe environment for two-way conversation – the safer your child feels, the better your conversation will go, and the more helpful you can be.

Australian Government reforms

The Australian Government has changed laws around vapes and vaping to protect young people from the harms of vaping and nicotine dependence.

From 1 July 2024, all vapes can only be sold by a pharmacy. It is illegal for non-pharmacy retailers to sell any type of vape.

Where state and territory laws allow, from 1 October 2024, people 18 years or older do not need a prescription to purchase vapes containing nicotine but must talk with a pharmacist before purchasing. Those under 18 need a prescription.

The law targets commercial and criminal supply of vapes. Individuals, including people under 18 years, who have vapes on them for personal use will not be targeted under changes to the law.

Read more about the new regulations for vapes at [Reforms to the regulation for vapes](#) or at [tga.gov.au](https://www.tga.gov.au)

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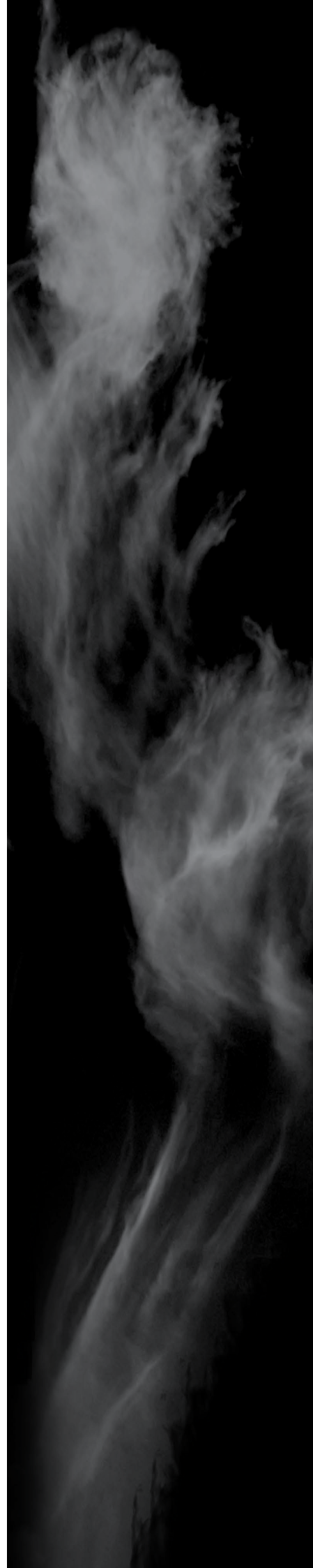
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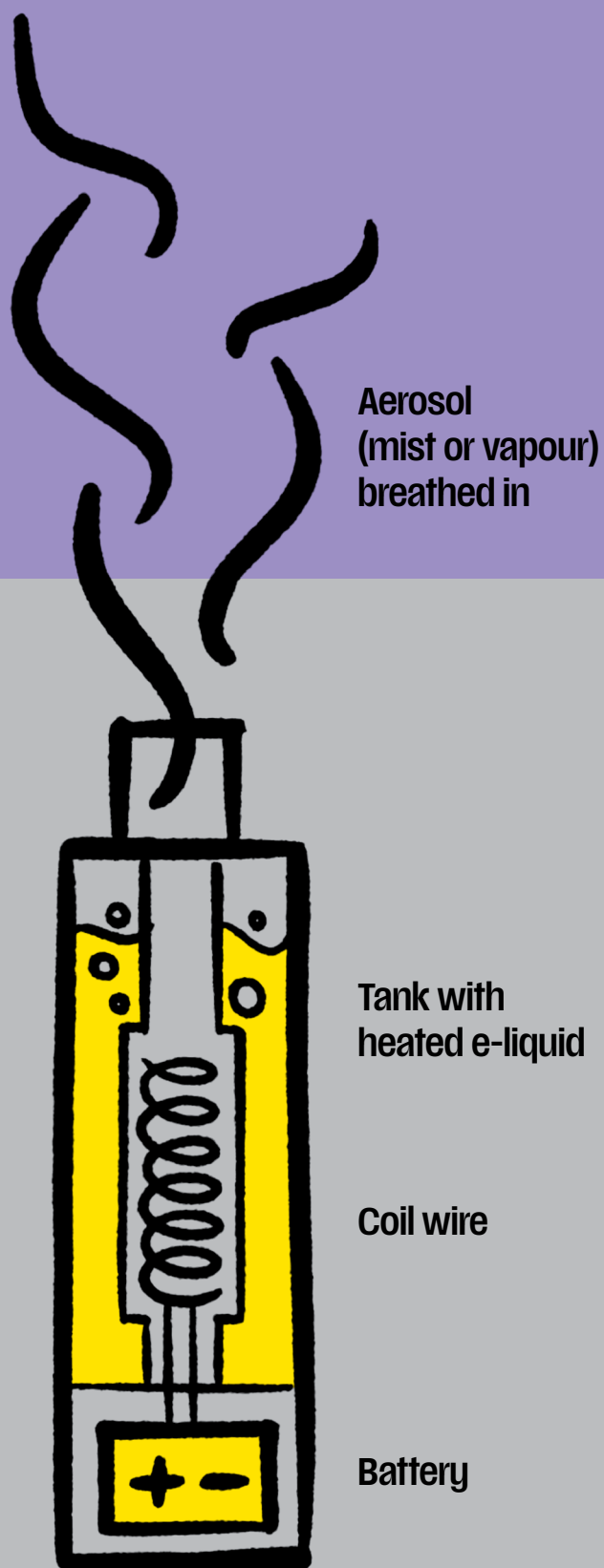
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About vaping



What is vaping?

Vaping is the use of an e-cigarette, or 'vape,' a battery-operated device that can look like a cigarette, cigar, pipe or a USB. The aerosol (mist or vapour) from vapes is made by heating up liquid chemicals that are breathed in.

Vapes deliver nicotine to the person who is using them and mimics the actions and sensations of smoking. This is commonly referred to as 'vaping.'

Vapes, mods, tank systems, e-cigs and vape pens are all forms of e-cigarettes.

What's in illegal vapes?

Over 200 unique chemicals have been found in illegal vapes, including formaldehyde, nicotine and heavy metals.

Most vapes in Australia contain nicotine – even when the packaging says they don't.

Illegal vapes can contain high levels of nicotine. The label is unlikely to say how much nicotine it contains.

Vapes can have dangerous substances in the liquids and the aerosols. Some chemicals found in vapes are known to cause cancer, like:

formaldehyde (used in industrial glues and for preserving corpses in hospitals and funeral homes)

acetone (found in some nail polish removers)

acetaldehyde (used in chemicals, perfumes, and plastics)

acrolein (often found in weedkiller)

heavy metals like nickel, tin, and lead.

About vaping

Vaping and your physical and mental health

Short and long-term vaping is dangerous to your child's health.

They may experience:

lung inflammation and throat irritation

persistent coughing and wheezing

breathing problems

shortness of breath

permanent lung damage

nausea

nicotine poisoning

nicotine dependence.

The nicotine in vapes is highly addictive and may also affect their mental health.

Vaping can harm the brain, which is still developing until their mid to late 20s. Vaping can harm parts of the brain that control attention, learning and memory. It can also increase the chances of using other addictive substances.

They may experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms that include:

mood changes

difficultly concentrating

feeling nervous, restless, irritable and/or anxious.

What are nicotine withdrawals and cravings?

Most vapes contain nicotine which is addictive. The more people vape, the more the brain and body gets used to having nicotine, which means nicotine dependence can develop quickly.

Nicotine activates receptors in the brain, which releases a brain chemical called dopamine that makes you feel good.

As the nicotine levels in the body fade, the brain craves more dopamine.

Once people are dependent on nicotine, they will experience withdrawal symptoms without it, which can make quitting hard.

When someone stops vaping, the nicotine level in the blood drops. This may cause bad feelings (like feeling tense and irritable, finding it difficult to concentrate or feeling depressed), physical symptoms (like a cough, dry throat and mouth, and dizziness) and strong urges to vape.

This is nicotine addiction.



Starting the conversation

Start the conversation early

One of the most common reasons young people try vaping is curiosity. Starting a conversation early with your child, or a young person you care about, will mean they will be better prepared to make informed decisions if they're offered a vape.

Choose the right time and place

Try to pick a time to have this chat when your child doesn't feel rushed and have the conversation in a place where they feel relaxed. By choosing a place you both feel comfortable, you'll both be inclined to be more open.

Don't assume

If you think your child may have tried vaping, try to avoid making accusations. Going through your child's space looking for evidence isn't recommended because it may undermine trust.

Avoid judging or lecturing

Be prepared to listen to their point of view and allow a two-way conversation. Being mindful to keep your body language and tone respectful can go a long way.

Ask open-ended questions

Instead of asking 'yes' or 'no' questions, ask open-ended questions that encourage a conversation. If you're genuinely invested in the conversation and curious, your child is less likely to get defensive.

Ask questions like:

What do you think about vaping?

What do you think if you see your friends vaping?

Do you know what's in a vape?

Do you know how vaping can damage your health?

During the conversation



Just listen

Give your child the chance to speak and express their thoughts and feelings. Listen without judgment and validate their emotions. This will encourage them to be open with you.

Give accurate information and don't exaggerate

Share facts about vaping, including its risks to physical and mental health. Be honest, but avoid using scare tactics and exaggerated comments.

Discuss peer pressure

Talk about the influence of friends and social settings on decision-making. Help your child to understand how to resist peer pressure and make healthy choices.

Help them work through the fear of losing friends, by reinforcing that friendships are based on more than just vaping and that most young people don't vape.

Some of the reasons young people may try vaping include:

they are curious

a desire to fit in with their friends

the appeal of different flavours

to copy actors, models or influencers in movies, video games or social media

a desire to appear grown up and assert independence

copying adults or older siblings who smoke or vape

a misguided view that vaping is safer than smoking.

If the conversation is going well, ask your child how they have avoided using vapes in the past when offered. This is a chance to discuss what has worked for them and what has made it hard or embarrassing to say 'no'.

Remind your child that most people don't vape, so they won't be alone if they say no. Offer some suggestions of ways to say 'no' if they're offered a vape again, for example:

'No, thanks, that's not my thing.'

'I don't like it anymore'

'It gives me a headache'

'I've tried that flavour, and I don't like it'

'I don't want to waste my money'

During the conversation

Focus on health and explain your concerns

Focus on how much you care about your child and want them to be healthy. If they are vaping, you can explain how concerned you are about nicotine and addiction, and the effects this will have on their health.

Talking to your child who isn't interested in vaping or is against it

Your child doesn't vape. They might have tried it in the past and have decided it's not for them.

Reinforce your approval of their decision not to vape.

Remind them that most young people don't vape.

Explore how much they know about vaping harms and risks. Ask them if they have questions and fill in any gaps for them.

If they acknowledge they've tried vaping, avoid judgment or lecturing. Listen to them and keep it a two-way conversation.

You don't need to convince them of the risks of vaping, but you can reinforce the negative impacts and support their decision not to vape.

Help them deal with or support a friend who vapes.

Be curious and interested in your child's thoughts and feelings.

Talking to your child who's been tempted to try vaping or their friends are vaping

You don't think your child has tried vaping, but they're curious about vaping or have been offered a vape in the past. They may not know what to do if offered a vape.

Reinforce their decision not to vape.

Remind them that most young people don't vape.

Address their curiosity about vaping with facts, not fear.

Many young people are very anti-smoking. Remind your child that vapes have similar harmful health impacts (including coughing, shortness of breath and nausea) to cigarettes. This is because most vapes sold in Australia also contain nicotine, even if they say they don't.

Let them know that lots of teens who vape wish they hadn't started, and say it becomes addictive much faster than they thought.

If your child is open, ask them about how they managed to avoid using vapes when offered. Discuss what has worked and what are some situations where it's been hard or embarrassing.

Help them work through the fear of losing friends by reinforcing that friendships are based on more than just vaping.

During the conversation



Talking to your child who is vaping occasionally or frequently

Your child is experimenting with vaping. They don't think they'll develop an addiction.

Tell them that health experts say there is no safe way to vape.

Remind them that many young people regret ever having started vaping due to the nicotine addiction.

Remind them that even 'light' or social' use can cause damage to their lungs.

Try to address why they vape. Reinforce that friendships are based on more than just vaping.

Remind them that nicotine is addictive and once they're regularly vaping, a nicotine addiction is likely. Explain the science behind nicotine withdrawal and cravings.

Tell them that most vapes contain nicotine – even if the packaging says they don't.

Talking to your child who is addicted to vaping

Your child is addicted to vaping and wants help to stop.

Encourage them and support their journey to quit.

If they say they've tried to cut back or stop vaping before, ask them what they did, what made it hard, and what would make it easier.

Remind them that health experts say there is no safe way to vape.

Let them know that there are resources and support services to help them quit. They might think quitting is too hard – don't challenge these feelings. Offer to help support them in seeking help.

Remind them that it's normal to have cravings and find it difficult to give up vapes. They shouldn't let this get them down. Lots of people have found it takes a few tries before they are completely vape-free. See the support and resources section in this guide for services to help young people quit.

Keep the conversation going

Consider your conversations about vaping with your child as ongoing. Like anything tricky or challenging, it will become easier with practice.

It might take a few goes before they'll engage with you on this topic. But once they do, they'll be more likely to talk about it again and open up with you more.



Things to look out for

If your child vapes for fun with friends, encourage them to think of healthier ways to have fun.

If you think your child is vaping to help manage anxiety, stress or feelings of sadness, acknowledge these triggers with care. This is a chance to reinforce the negative impact vaping and nicotine has on mental health. (See the 'Support and Resources' section for links to support services).

If your child owns or has owned their own vape, their vape use can escalate, and they risk addiction.

If your child has vaped before, be alert for the potential that they may take up cigarette smoking or begin to use other nicotine products such as pouches.

Things to remember

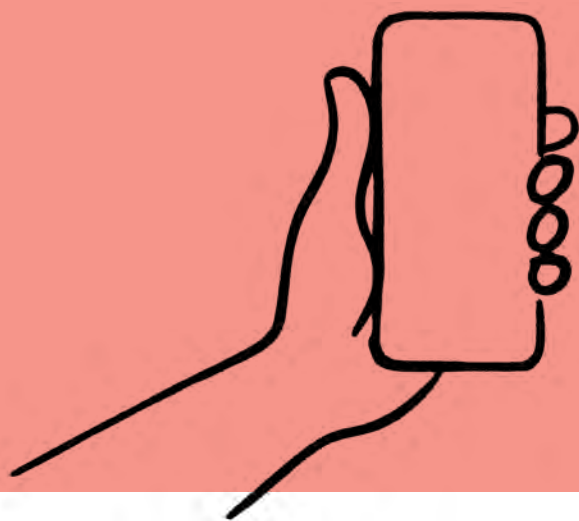
Reinforce that nicotine is a short-term fix and once they're using it regularly, a nicotine addiction is highly likely. Explain the science behind nicotine withdrawal and cravings.

If your child talks about their friends vaping to handle stress or sadness, discuss healthier ways to deal with these feelings, such as exercise, healthy eating, and using support services like headspace.

Criticise vapes as a product, don't criticise people who vape. Young people may disengage if they feel like you're judging their friends who vape.

Support and resources

Finding the right support can help your child quit successfully. Remind them they're not alone on this journey.



If they're vaping and thinking about quitting, there are lots of options and resources to support and motivate them.

Here are a few quick steps to help them get started:

Speak to your **GP or a trusted health professional** for help with nicotine dependence.

Call **Quitline** on 13 7848.

Download the **My QuitBuddy** app to set goals and reminders around quitting. The My QuitBuddy app includes great features to help you plan and quit successfully. Age restrictions may apply – check your app store for details.



Help and support for your child



Quitline

For support to stop smoking or vaping, connect with Quitline. Call **13 7848** to speak with qualified Quitline counsellors ready to support you on your quitting journey. Or message on WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger @QuitVic, live chat through **quit.org.au** or request a call back at a time that suits you. You are not alone. Quitline is here to help.

13 7848

Quitline website



Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline offers a free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people aged from 5 to 25. The service is available 24 hours a day from anywhere in Australia.

1800 551 800

Kids Helpline website



Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue offers information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live.

1300 224 636

Beyond Blue website



headspace

headspace is a mental health support service for young people and their families with a focus on early intervention. Young people aged between 12 and 25 experiencing mental health issues can contact headspace online or via phone to access support services from 9am to 1am AEST, 7 days a week, or can visit their local headspace centre.

1800 650 890

headspace website

Support and resources

Help and support for you



You can also talk to a Quitline counsellor about any concerns you have and get further advice on what you can do as a parent or carer, or how to start a conversation with your child.

How to contact Quitline:

Call [13 7848](tel:137848)

Start a chat via [Facebook Messenger](#) or [Whatsapp](#) (VIC, SA, NT and WA)

[Request a call back](#) or live chat at quit.org.au

Additional resources

[Alcohol and Drug Foundation – Talking about vaping with young people](#)

[VicHealth – Vaping conversation guide for parents](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care – About vaping and e-cigarettes](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care – Vaping and you](#)

[Healthdirect – Vaping](#)

[Quit.org.au](https://quit.org.au)

vapingfacts.org.au - Information to help you talk about the risks of vaping with young people

Remember, lots of young people have found it takes a few tries before they are completely vape-free. It's important to encourage them to keep trying even if it takes them a few goes before they quit completely.

For more information and help to quit visit health.gov.au/vaping, quit.org.au, download the [My QuitBuddy](#) app or talk to a health professional.

Acknowledgement

The content in this document is drawn from evidence-based materials developed by Quit, VicHealth in partnership with the Behaviour Change Collaborative, Alcohol and Drug Foundation and HealthDirect.

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Find support



health.gov.au/vaping