



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

Today's 14 to 24-year-olds are the first generation to be exposed to nicotine largely through vaping rather than cigarettes.

Vaping can damage your health now and in the future.

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.

One in three young people have tried vaping. More than half of young people who vape have tried to stop. It can take a few attempts to quit and there are supports available to help.





## Introduction



### How to use this guide

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

Starting a conversation about vaping might feel challenging, but it's an important one to have – and it could change their life for the better. Research shows that many young people are becoming increasingly concerned about the health effects of vaping, and a significant number of those who vape want to quit. This is why continuing to talk openly and clearly about the health risks of vaping is so important.

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.

### Vaping laws

The Australian Government's laws around vapes and vaping aim to protect young people from the harms of vaping and nicotine dependence.

People 18 years and older can buy therapeutic vapes from participating pharmacies, subject to certain conditions being met and where state and territory laws allow.

People under 18 also need a prescription to access therapeutic vapes to ensure they get appropriate medical advice and supervision.

These laws are focused on stopping the commercial and criminal supply of vapes. Individuals – including those under 18 – who possess a vape for personal use won't be targeted under the laws.

More information is available at the Therapeutic Goods Administration website: [tga.gov.au](https://www.tga.gov.au)

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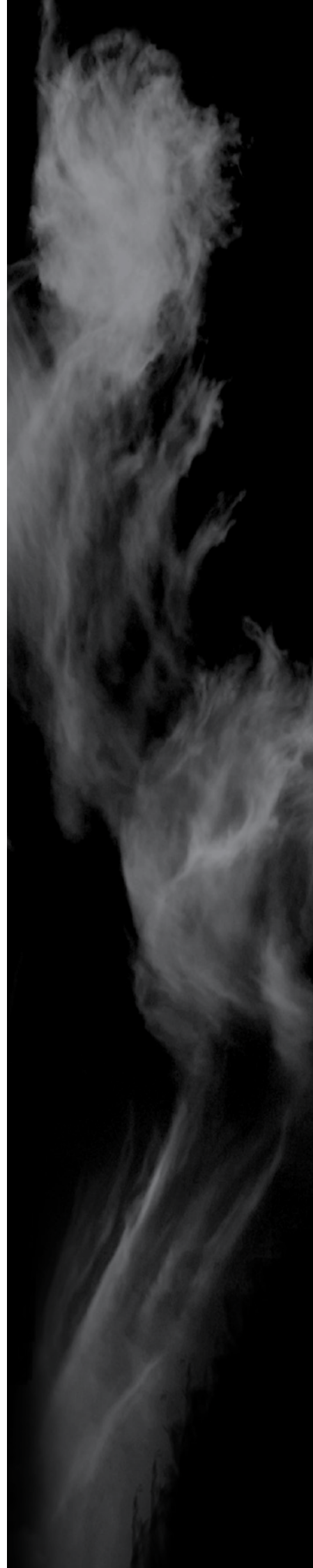
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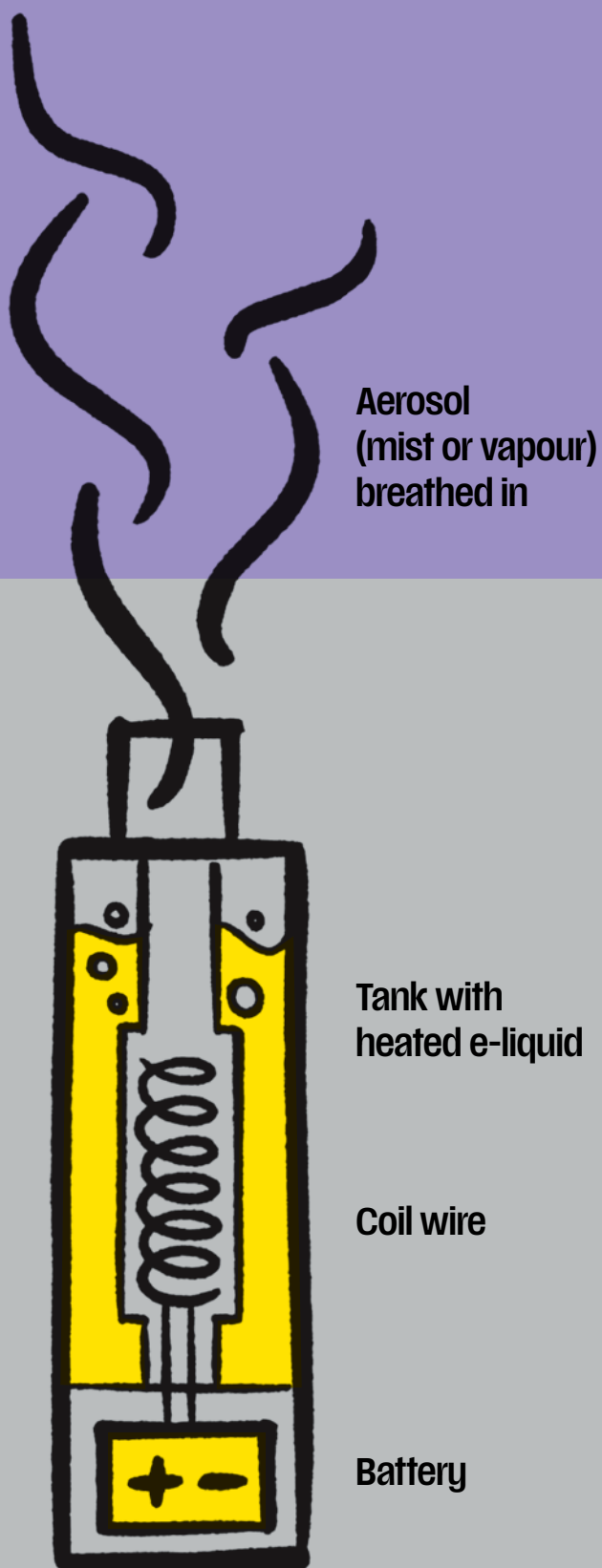
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# About vaping



## 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?

Illegal vapes contain dangerous substances and over 200 unique chemicals have been found like formaldehyde and heavy metals.

Most illegal 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 illegal 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

Vaping can damage your health now and in the future. Even occasional vaping can be harmful to your health.

You may experience:

lung inflammation and throat irritation

persistent coughing

breathing problems such as shortness of breath and wheezing, which can also decrease physical performance

temporary loss or change in taste

nausea

swelling, bleeding and redness of the gums

trouble with your asthma

nicotine poisoning

nicotine dependence.

Vaping and nicotine can also affect your child's wellbeing and mental health, including effects on:

their **mood**, particularly when nicotine levels in their body drop, and may make mental health issues like anxiety and depression worse

their **brain**, which is still developing until their mid to late 20s. It can harm parts of the brain that control attention, learning and memory.

### What are nicotine withdrawals and cravings?

Most vapes contain nicotine, which is addictive. The more people vape, the more their 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. Some signs of nicotine withdrawal include:

nicotine cravings

feeling irritable or grumpy

finding it hard to concentrate

feeling nervous or restless

changes in appetite

feeling like they have the flu

feeling dizzy or having head spins

depression

finding it hard to sleep (insomnia).



# 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, can help them feel 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 physical and mental 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, reduced fitness, shortness of breath and nausea) to cigarettes. This is because most illegal vapes sold in Australia also contain nicotine, even if the packaging says 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 and lead to addiction.

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.

Encourage them to talk to their friends and try quitting together, as this can make the journey easier.

### 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.

Encourage them to talk with their friends and try quitting together, as this can make the journey easier.

Remind them it's normal to have cravings and to find it difficult to give up vapes. Many people have found it takes a few attempts before they become completely vape-free. It's important to encourage them to keep trying. Finding the right support and knowing what to expect when quitting can help. Check the 'Support and resources' section in this guide for services that can 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 be more open with you.

## 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 tried vaping, be aware they may also try cigarettes or other nicotine products, like pouches. Using other nicotine products is not good for their health or a risk-free alternative to vaping.

These products are not considered Nicotine Replacement Therapies and often contain high levels of nicotine (even if the packaging doesn't say so), which is highly addictive. They may also contain other unknown and dangerous ingredients which can be harmful to their health.

Early research shows oral nicotine products are linked to:

- mouth ulcers and abnormal growths
- upset stomach
- sore mouth
- sore throat
- nausea.

## Nicotine addiction – things to remember

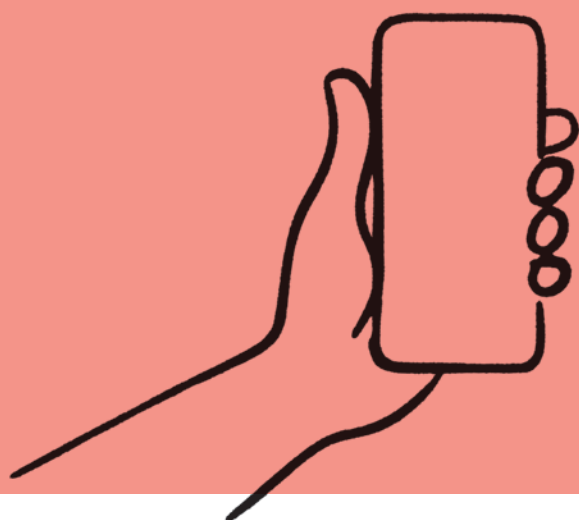
Reinforce that nicotine is a short-term fix and once they're using it regularly, a nicotine addiction is highly likely. Explain the science behind nicotine withdrawal and cravings.

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:

Download the [My QuitBuddy](#) app – your free, pocket-sized support crew to help you quit vaping for good.



Whether you're just getting started or staying on track, it's like having your best friend in your pocket, offering tips, motivation, and support whenever you need it. Age restrictions may apply – check your app store for details.

Download the [Pave](#) app – a free app to help young people to quit vaping.

Speak to your [doctor or a trusted health professional](#) for help with nicotine dependence.

## Help and support for your child

### Quitline



For support to stop smoking or vaping, connect with Quitline. Call [13 7848](tel:137848) 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](http://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](tel:137848)

[Quitline website](http://quitline.org.au)

### 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](tel:1800551800)

[Kids Helpline website](http://kids-helpline.org.au)

### 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 22 4636](tel:1300224636)

[Beyond Blue website](http://beyondblue.org.au)

### 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](tel:1800650890)

[headspace website](http://headspace.org.au)



## 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](https://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, Disability and Ageing – About vaping and e-cigarettes](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing – Vaping and you](#)

[Healthdirect – Vaping](#)

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

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](https://health.gov.au/vaping), [quit.org.au](https://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.*

# It can be easier to quit with a friend.

Find support



[health.gov.au/vaping](https://health.gov.au/vaping)