

Guidance for teaching about vaping



Every Mind Matters: Guidance for teaching about vaping

These resources cover three key areas on the topic of vaping for students ages 11–13 (lower KS3). The topics covered are:

1. What vaping is and why young people might vape
2. The impact of vaping
3. Nicotine and the impact of nicotine.

The slides and slide notes will guide you through each session activity. The resources have been produced as three bitesize sessions, which can be used in a range of ways:

- Each resource can be used as a stand-alone session to meet the learning needs of individual classes.
- The three resources can be used together over a few sessions to build and develop deeper understanding around vaping.
- The resources can be used in form time or assemblies.
- The resources could also be embedded in pre-existing lesson content around smoking.

This teacher guidance document has been put together to support the teaching of vaping in a safe way, give information about signposting and guidance for supporting conversations around vaping. There is an information section at the end which gives an overview of the content covered in the sessions.

In addition, **FRANK** offers guidance on what to do if you suspect a child is using tobacco, vapes, drugs or alcohol. **GOV.UK** also offers a training module to support teachers and/or subject leads with understanding and delivering the drugs, alcohol and tobacco section of the statutory relationships, sex and health education curriculum.

Maintaining a safe teaching and learning environment

It is important that no student feels judged or shamed around vaping, but it is important for them to know the facts so they can make an informed choice. See the PSHE Association's **Handling complex issues safely in the PSHE education classroom** for more details on teaching possibly sensitive PSHE topics.

- **Agree and reinforce ground rules** for the classroom, ideally drawn up with students.
- **Distance** by using fictional or hypothetical teaching examples. Ensure students keep any examples anonymous.
- **Enable and value questions** by encouraging questions, but also providing a way (e.g., a sticky note wall or question box) for students to ask or share something privately.
- Familiarise yourself with the **school's safeguarding policy**.
- This lesson covers addiction, so **be mindful of any students who may be affected** by the topic and offer a space to debrief after if any students wish to talk about it.
- You may wish to consider any **local support services** available to young people in your area in case any young people make a disclosure and are looking for support.



Guidance for one-to-one conversations with young people around addiction or substance use

- Try to keep one-to-one conversations non-judgmental, supporting the young person and understanding they have agency and choice.
- Thank the young person for being open and honest.
- Explore their understanding of addiction and if they think they are addicted, or a family or friend is experiencing addiction (they cannot control their use of it and are dependent on it).
- Explore possible options for support with the young person (family, friends, pastoral staff in school, local services) and help empower the young person to decide what the best next steps may be. **The FRANK support service search tool** can be helpful. Search 'services for young people' and your school postcode to find a list of local services that you may be able to signpost students to if they are struggling with addiction.
- Addiction can often correspond with mental health issues, so it might be worth checking in with the student about how their mental health is and then referring to the appropriate local services (GP, CAMHS, etc.).
- Be aware of any safeguarding disclosures or risks and ensure you follow your school's safeguarding policy.

Signposting

It is important that students are shown the signposting slide at the end of each session which includes the following:

- If you or a friend are currently vaping and want some support to stop, you can visit the FRANK website, call their helpline or use their text service (Text 82111) <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/vapes>
- If you want any support around resisting peer pressure, Childline offer some excellent tips: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/friends/peer-pressure/>

Other lesson resources available on smoking and vaping

- **BBC Bitesize** – a range of free KS3 biology resources which cover the effects of smoking, passive smoking and electronic cigarettes.
- **Oak National Academy** – a multitude of resources, all aimed at KS3, on the effects of smoking, how to combat addiction and where to seek help.
- **PSHE Association** – a wide range of resources to support planning/teaching about alcohol and drugs (membership is required).



Overview of session content

1. What and why?

This session covers key facts around vaping and considers why young people might choose to vape.

- Vapes, also known as e-cigarettes, are **electronic devices**. People use them to inhale nicotine in the form of an **aerosol**. Nicotine vapes can help adult smokers to stop smoking. It is illegal in the UK to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under the age of 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under-18s.
- Nicotine is a stimulant. It can cause blood pressure, breathing speed and heart rate to increase. New nicotine users can also experience dizziness, nausea and stomach cramps.
- The legal age for access to nicotine vapes is 18 due to the risks and the impact, particularly on younger people.
- It took many years before we understood the devastating health harms of tobacco smoking, and over that time tobacco products were heavily promoted to consumers by the tobacco industry. Experts are clear that vaping is much less harmful than smoking, but that it is not without risk. It isn't yet possible to know what health harms might emerge in the future from vaping. That's why vaping is only recommended for adults as a way to quit smoking.
- There are a wide range of reasons why young people might choose to vape, including to look cool, to help with stress, it's social, wanting to fit in, like the taste (enjoyable), seen on social media e.g. TikTok, wanting to stop smoking, advertising, wanting to try something new, boredom and addiction.

2. The Impact of Vaping

This session covers both personal and societal potential impacts of vaping, including the following factors:

- Nicotine can increase levels of stress and anxiety, and also affect the ability to concentrate – it can have a knock-on impact on mental health.
- Financial impact (it's expensive).
- The long-term impact of vaping on health is not yet known. Vaping is much less harmful than smoking as you don't inhale the toxic tar and carbon monoxide you get from tobacco smoke but vapes aren't harmless and the health impacts aren't fully known yet.
- Sharing a vape with someone else carries the risk of picking up diseases.
- Toxins are released into the lungs which could be harmful. The period while the lungs are growing is important. We know smoking from an early age is especially damaging – the lungs don't develop as they should, so lung function never reaches the peak it should have. Although the effects of vaping will be lower than smoking, those effects will still be more marked in teenagers.
- Environmental impact – both vapes and disposable vapes can be recycled, but often they end up in landfill and incorrect disposal can potentially release hazardous chemical waste.
- Addiction – nicotine is an addictive substance that can be hard to stop using once you've started.

3. Nicotine

This session considers the effects of nicotine and what nicotine addiction may look like, including how to seek support if they are worried about addiction.

- **What is the effect of nicotine on young people?**

It initially makes people feel good, it makes people want more, it can create more anxiety, it can be hard to concentrate, young people's brains are possibly more sensitive to it, young people can lose control over their choices.

- **What might be some signs that someone is addicted to nicotine?**

An addictive substance is something that creates cravings for more, e.g. alcohol, nicotine. Addiction is when someone then becomes dependent on a substance (they feel like they need it all the time). Signs might include cravings, irritability when they don't have it, anxiety, trouble concentrating, headaches or thinking about vaping/smoking all the time. Young people's brains are still developing and there's evidence that they are more sensitive to becoming addicted to nicotine.

- **What behaviors might you see if someone is addicted to nicotine from vaping?**

Vaping very regularly both with friends and alone, keeping secrets or lying about how much they use it, doing more extreme things to be able to vape, e.g. borrowing money, vaping even when they want to cut down or stop.

It is possible the signs of addiction might not be noticed for a range of reasons including they might not link their feelings or behaviours to not having that substance, they might not know the signs, they might not want to admit they are addicted due to shame or they might have normalised their substance use.

