

Vaping...

a guide for Youth Groups

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What is vaping?

Vaping is the use of an electronic device to inhale vapour from an 'e-liquid'. The main ingredients found in e-liquids are vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol – food additives which are also commonly found in cosmetics, dog food, and hygiene products. Most e-liquids also contain nicotine, as well as small amounts of flavourings and sweeteners. Despite the Department of Health and Social Care introducing strict regulations and setting a 2% (or 20mg per ml) limit on nicotine strength in e-liquids, there has been a surge in illegal vapes on UK's High Streets which contain illegally high levels of nicotine and unregulated ingredients.

UK's Law on vaping

- Vapes and vaping products containing nicotine are age-restricted, and it is illegal for them to be sold to under-18s and for adults to buy them on their behalf.
- Certain ingredients, such as caffeine and taurine, are banned in e-liquids.
- All vapes and e-liquids containing nicotine have to be certified by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before they can be sold in the UK. You can search for brands on the MHRA website.
- Any product that is not listed on the above website should be returned to the shop it was purchased from, or reported to your local Trading Standards office. You can call Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards on 0300 111 8002.

Research from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) has found that a third of vape products sold in the UK are not compliant with regulations.

If you know of anyone who sells vapes illegally, you can report them to Trading Standards through the Citizens Advice online portal.



What are the effects of vaping?

Many young people take up vaping because they see it as completely 'risk-free', however there is now mounting evidence about the significant negative health impacts that vaping carries.

Some of the most commonly reported side-effects of vaping include: headaches, shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, recurring cough and fatigue.

Many dentists are also now seeing a spike in young patients with 'vape tongue', caused by e-cigarette use. Vape tongue is where you start to lose your taste because of excessive vape use, and symptoms include a numb tongue, failure to taste your vape flavour or experiencing an unpleasant taste from your vape. Vape misuse has also been linked to poor oral health, including gum disease, tooth decay and bad breath as a result of exposure to chemical-filled vapour.

For young people whose brains are still developing, nicotine can be extremely harmful and affect parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse control. Vaping may also lead to further substance misuse in the future.

Currently, the long-term effects of vaping are unknown – however with a mounting list of concerning side-effects, it is very worrying what long-term issues may arise in coming years.



Along with a video posted on YouTube by Ryan Horace from Pairyosi Vape – a disposable vape manufacturer in China, there is also certainly some questions to be asked about the standard of hygiene behind the production of these vapes.

In the video, a production line is shown assembling the products and inserting them into their casings, before a worker uses his bare hands to connect a mouthpiece to the top. Further scenes also show a different worker handling components of the vape with no gloves on.

On Pairyosi Vape's website, the company describes themselves as 'one of the leading manufactures of electronic cigarettes in the world' – making it likely your vape may come just from them.

Vaping and young people

There has been a dramatic rise in youth use of vapes, with a survey by NHS Digital finding that 'nearly one in five 15-year-olds use e-cigarettes' in 2022.

The increase in youth vaping has coincided with cheap disposable vapes arriving on the UK market. The vapes, often brightly coloured and bare a striking resemblance to highlighters you'd find in a pencil case, are stocked in corner shops and online in a host of different fruity flavours. With shops failing to ID individuals to see if they meet the minimum age requirement of 18 to buy vapes, they are extremely easy to purchase. If shops do happen to ID an individual, there is still no guarantee that the buyer is of age with the distribution and use of fake IDs being rampant throughout England. Some shops even classify a simple statement of the buyers date of birth as a valid form of identification, even without seeing a physical copy of identification.

There is no denying that vapes are everywhere, they're on every outing with friends, every smoking area, and you

can almost guarantee that you will collide with a fume of strawberry or pink-lemonade smelling vape smoke every time you leave your house.

Their growing phenomenon may be down to their brightly coloured packaging and fruity flavours, but they're also considerably cheaper than cigarettes. Teens can buy vapes for as cheap as £4, but a 20 pack of Marlboro Gold in leading supermarkets will set you back £14.10 – a figure only set to increase as prices will continue to jump as part of the Government's plans to have a 'smoke-free' England by 2030.

We also have teen idols, like Lana Del Rey, who are often spotted onstage at their concerts and festivals duel-wielding a microphone and vape in front of tens of thousands of impressionable, young teens.

There is no wonder that these vapes are plastered all over social media, as the hashtag #elfbar (a popular vape brand) currently has over 400 million views, while #vaping has 3.1 billion on the TikTok platform – an app popular amongst children as young as 7 and teens. When scouring the TikTok app, you can also find a host of different accounts reviewing and 'rating' different vapes, with some of these boasting over 10,000 followers.



How can you quit vaping?

There are many effective methods to successfully stop vaping.

The first step, which may seem obvious, is getting rid of any vape pens or e-liquids that you have. Immediately removing any temptations will set you up for a successful start to your quit journey.

It is important to identify any habits or rituals that are associated with your vape use. For example, only vaping when you're out socialising with your friends. Being able to recognise the 'trigger(s)' for you to vape will allow you to set up a plan to help break those cycles.

Having a distraction will be a big help on your quitting journey. A distraction could be anything from taking up a new hobby, like reading or baking, or starting to exercise more – this could just be going for a simple walk. When cravings kick in, having an easy distraction to turn to will make it a lot easier to ignore and curb those cravings. Quitting vaping can be tough, which is why having a strong support system in place is very helpful when you need a helping hand. Turn to trusted friends and family to support and help you along your quit journey.

Remember, it's important to always keep your motivations in mind when you're quitting. This could be anything from quitting for your loved ones, being able to exercise without getting out of breath quickly – or maybe it's to fend off bad breath! If you're struggling to quit, writing down your reasons for quitting can be a great motivational tool to stop you from picking up a vape.

