



# Vaping & e-cigarettes

---

## Street names:

Vapes, vaping, pens, pods, electronic cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), e-cigs, electro-smoke, green cig, smartsmoker.

## What is vaping?

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that use a coil to heat a liquid to produce a vapour, which is inhaled – mimicking smoking. This is commonly referred to as ‘vaping’. E-cigarettes are mostly used to vape nicotine e-liquid solutions. Some devices can also be modified to inhale other drugs such as THC (cannabis) or nicotine-free ‘e-liquids’.

## What do they look like?

Devices usually resemble cigarettes, cigars or pipes, as well as everyday items such as pens, USB memory sticks, and larger cylindrical or rectangular devices.

## How do they work?

E-cigarettes use heat to transform a nicotine (or sometimes non-nicotine) e-liquid solution into vapour, which is then inhaled.

## Why do people vape?

People vape for various reasons, including:

- to help them reduce or quit smoking
- belief that they are less harmful than traditional cigarettes
- cheaper than traditional cigarettes
- taste better than traditional cigarettes due to flavouring.
- curiosity
- seen as more acceptable than traditional cigarettes

## Immediate and long-term effects:

The immediate effects of vaping are identical to other nicotine products, including tobacco. For more information about the immediate effects of nicotine, view the relevant [drug information card](#).

Since vaping is a relatively new phenomenon, the longer-term health effects are unknown. Vaping may be less harmful than smoking conventional cigarettes, but it is not harm free. The liquids used in vapes contain a range of toxic chemicals. Emerging evidence indicates that vaping may be associated with severe lung disease.

---

## **Common questions about vaping:**

### **What are the risks around vaping and young people?**

The evidence around the harms associated with vaping among young people are yet to be determined. However, evidence shows that young people who start vaping are more likely to take up cigarette smoking than non-vaping young people, and rates of vaping appear to be higher among young people with mental health problems.

### **Can vaping lead to nicotine dependence?**

Nicotine, found in many vaping products, is highly addictive. Continued use of nicotine vapes can lead to dependence. Withdrawal from nicotine can result in various symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety, intense cravings, difficulty concentrating, disrupted sleep patterns, and feelings of sadness or depression. Additionally, several vaping products fail to disclose the presence of nicotine, despite containing it, often at very high concentrations. Using nicotine vapes as a smoking cessation aid is not recommended as a first-line treatment.

### **Is it a safer alternative than cigarettes?**

While it's widely believed that vaping causes less harm than smoking cigarettes because vapes don't contain tobacco (tobacco contains a majority of the toxic, cancer causing chemicals) – it's still not harmless. Although vapour produced by the e-cigarette is probably less harmful to bystanders than cigarette smoke, it is not completely harm free.

There are known risks associated with any type of nicotine exposure on brain development, meaning that pregnant women and adolescents should avoid vaping. Nicotine can damage DNA, promote tumours, and is linked to a number of different cancers. There are also risks linked to nicotine poisoning via ingestion and skin contact with the e-liquid solutions.

The manufacturer quality of vaping devices is highly variable. Significant differences in product designs and the way people use them make it difficult to determine the potential level of nicotine toxicity in each device or liquid.

Vaping devices can be modified to deliver a higher, more harmful concentration of nicotine and producing more toxic chemical particles in the inhaled vape cloud.

### **Is vaping legal?**

In Australia, any vaporised nicotine product must be purchased with a doctor's prescription.