

Vaping fact sheet for parents and teachers



Vaping causes serious health risks to teens

Since the mid-2010s, there has been a big rise in vaping among young people, including teens who have never smoked. In 2022–23, almost one-in-three Australian secondary school students had tried vaping. However, it's important to remember that most teens do not regularly vape.

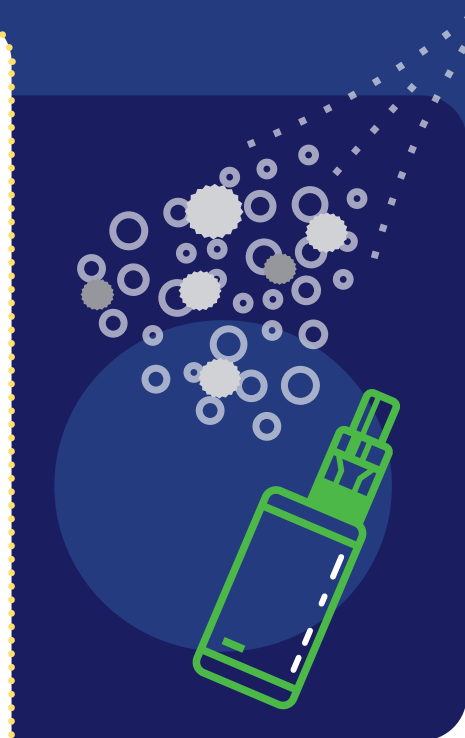
Tobacco and vape companies are using social media to sell vapes to teens and young adults. Teens see using vapes as normal and widespread among their peers.

About vapes

Vapes are battery-operated electronic devices that heat a substance (e-liquid or juice) until it becomes an aerosol that users breathe in. The aerosol is a fine spray of chemicals that settle deep in the lungs. Some of these chemicals pass through the lungs into the bloodstream and travel around the body.

Vapes contain many different chemicals including solvents and flavourings – some are known to be toxic to the lungs and can damage the heart. Contaminants found in aerosol include agricultural chemicals (pesticides and herbicides) and toxic metals. When a vaping substance is heated, some chemicals can break down or react together to form new chemicals, including ones known to cause cancer.

Vaping substances may contain nicotine. Nicotine causes addiction in people who vape and in people who smoke tobacco. Vapes sold unlawfully may also contain other drugs such as THC, the psychoactive ingredient of cannabis.



A partnership between:



Fast facts



1 Legality of vapes

- Vaping products, regardless of whether they contain nicotine, can only be legally sold to adults¹ by pharmacies.
- All disposable vapes are illegal in Australia.
- The national laws about the legal sale and requirements for vaping products are explained on the Therapeutic Goods Administration website ([tga.gov.au](https://www.tga.gov.au)). States and territories also have their own regulations concerning vaping products.
- Adults who are thinking of using vapes to quit smoking need to discuss their options with their doctor or pharmacist.
- If you see vaping products for sale somewhere that is not a pharmacy (such as a tobacco store, convenience store or an online retailer), you can report it via [tga.gov.au](https://www.tga.gov.au).

2 Safety

- Batteries in vapes can explode or catch fire.
- Vaping products sold unlawfully may be mislabelled: often products that don't show nicotine on their label do, in fact, contain nicotine.
- Vaping substances can cause nicotine poisoning when swallowed, splashed on the skin or in the eyes. Even puffing on a vape can be risky for children and could lead to poisoning.

Urgently call Triple 0 (000) for an ambulance if you suspect:

- a child is exposed to nicotine
- an adult is exposed to nicotine liquid and shows signs of **nicotine poisoning**.

If an exposed adult does not feel ill, call the Poisons Information Centre on **13 11 26** at any time.

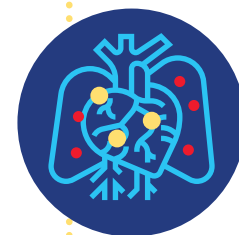
3 Detecting vape use



- Vapes sold unlawfully come in all shapes and sizes. They can look like a highlighter, a pen or USB. Some are small enough to fit into a pocket or a pencil case. Taking off any cap to see if the item has a mouthpiece will reveal if it is a vape.
- Not all vapes release an aerosol that can be seen. The easiest way to know if people are vaping is by an unexpected smell in the air that comes from vape flavouring. Teens tend to be attracted to fruit or sweet flavours, however these sweet-smelling vape flavours are now illegal to sell in Australia.

4 Harms of vaping

- Vapes contain harmful chemicals and many contain nicotine as well.
- Nicotine harms the way teenage brains grow, which may affect memory and concentration.
- Teens become more easily and rapidly addicted to nicotine than adults, and non-smoking teens who vape are three times more likely to start smoking cigarettes.
- Teens who vape are more likely to have poorer mental health. Quitting nicotine can improve mental health.
- The short-term health effects of vaping can include nausea, dizziness, throat irritation and coughing. More serious harms include lung injury and seizures.
- Young people who vape may be more likely to have bronchitis, wheeze, or shortness of breath.
- The long-term health effects are not yet known; however long-term impacts could potentially include an increased risk of cancer, heart disease, oral health problems and lung disease.



Quitline
137848

There are many ways to contact Quitline including **webchat, WhatsApp and Messenger**. Scan the QR code or visit quit.org.au/quitline



1. Some states or territories allow pharmacies to supply vapes to people under 18 years old when they have a doctor's prescription.