



What is a vape?

A vape (e-cigarette) is a battery-powered device that heats a liquid to produce an aerosol, which is inhaled (sometimes called vapour).

What is in vape liquids?

Vape liquids (also called: e-liquid, e-juice, vape juice, or juice) typically contain:

Nicotine

Nicotine is a mild stimulant and is the substance in vapes that people may become dependent on.

Propylene Glycol (PG) and Vegetable Glycerine (VG)

PG and VG form the base liquid that “carries” the other ingredients. They are odourless and tasteless. Both can be used in different ratios and are responsible for producing the exhaled vapour “cloud”.

Flavours

There’s a wide range of flavours on the global market, but in Australia, legal options in pharmacies are limited to tobacco, menthol, and mint.

Other substances*

Some people vape other substances, like cannabis e-liquids, but this is less common in Australia.

*This fact sheet specifically relates to vaping nicotine e-liquids only

Laws in Queensland¹

- Nicotine vaping products can be legally purchased in pharmacies for the purpose of smoking cessation or managing nicotine dependence.
- People 18 years and older can buy vapes with nicotine (up to 20mg/mL) without a prescription; higher concentrations require a prescription.
- Under-18s can access vapes with a prescription.
- Disposable vapes are banned.
- All vaping products sold in pharmacies must meet set product standards. For more information go to: [Product standards: unapproved therapeutic vapes](#)

What are the potential health risks of vaping?

Evidence is still emerging, but we understand:

- Long-term health harms of vaping are still unclear.²
- There has been an increase in non-smokers who start vaping and becoming dependent on nicotine. Nicotine dependence can have short-term impacts on mood and behaviour. Additionally, it can negatively affect finances, relationships, and for young people, school engagement.
- Vaping can worsen asthma and other pre-existing lung conditions.³
- Inhaling too much nicotine can cause short-term headaches and nausea.
- When nicotine e-liquid is swallowed, there is a risk of death from nicotine poisoning (especially in children or pets).⁴
- Although a rare occurrence, vapes can explode, causing injuries.
- Products sold on the illicit market in Australia (i.e. any vapes sold outside of a pharmacy) are not subject to the same product standards as pharmacy vapes. They may contain banned substances and labels on packaging may be inaccurate.

What are the potential health benefits of vaping?

Potential benefits of vaping apply only to individuals who already smoke tobacco. For non-smokers, vaping increases their risk of harm. Evidence is still emerging, but we understand:

- Vaping is considered less harmful than tobacco smoking for people who smoke.³ This is largely due to the elimination of tobacco and the toxins created from combustion (burning).
- Vaping can help some smokers quit more effectively than nicotine replacement therapies (NRT).⁶
- Switching from smoking to vaping can improve symptoms in people with respiratory issues (e.g. asthma and COPD).⁴

How to respond to someone who vapes

Responses to vaping should be tailored to the individual. Workers should consider smoking history, current vaping habits (e.g. amount/frequency), and readiness to change (motivation).

Example responses:

Do you work with people who've only tried vaping?

Many individuals, both young and old, try vaping out of curiosity but don't continue, so don't require any intervention. However, some may choose to continue. A brief intervention that provides education on nicotine dependence and encourages an open, balanced discussion about risks can be beneficial. It's essential to present the risks accurately without exaggeration. The ['Influencing Gen Vape Summary Report'](#) provides more ideas on how to support young people in this space.

Do you work with people who are not ready to quit, but experience cravings in places where they can't vape (e.g. at school, work, home)?

Craving management strategies and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) - like patches or nicotine gum - could be used as a harm reduction strategy during these times. A healthcare professional (e.g. GP) or Quitline (13 78 48) can offer guidance and support. The Insight resource ['Coping with cravings'](#) may also be helpful.

Do you work with people who vape to quit smoking?

In Australia, nicotine vaping products are not considered first-line treatment for smoking cessation. However, individuals may choose to use them as a cessation aid. Evidence suggests they can be effective.⁵ It is recommended that those who are using vapes to quit smoking switch to products from the regulated pharmacy market, rather than through the illicit market.

Given that the long-term health effects of vaping are still unknown, it is recommended that vaping be used only as a short-term aid. Ideally, individuals should aim to stop vaping once they feel confident they will not return to smoking.

If someone is looking for other ways to quit smoking, NRT is a first-line option for smoking cessation in Australia. Find out more about NRT in Dovetail's ['Tips for working with young people experiencing nicotine dependence'](#).

Do you work with people trying to quit vaping?

While effective vaping cessation strategies are still being studied, methods used for smoking cessation such as behavioural strategies or NRT may help. Some adjustments may be needed due to the differences between smoking and vaping. Additionally, young people may require different approaches to adults. If you're unsure how to assist, refer to a healthcare professional or Quitline. Alternatively, Dovetail's [Vape Check](#) resource includes a quit/reduction plan template (pg. 3).

Do you work in a school?

A dedicated resource can be found here - ['Effective responses to vaping in schools'](#).

Please note: The reference list for all in-text citations can be found at: <https://insight.qld.edu.au/shop/vaping-information-resource-for-workers>

