

WHAT IS A VAPE?

Vapes (or e-cigarettes) are devices that deliver an aerosol by heating a solution that users breathe in. The aerosol is commonly referred to as 'vapour'. They were first developed to help people quit smoking, but they are not safe for children. Some children have started vaping as early as primary school.

WHY IS VAPING HARMFUL?

- » Vapes produce an aerosol that can contain over 200 harmful chemicals, including those found in:



Cleaning products



Nail polish remover



Weed killer



Bug spray

Most vapes contain nicotine, an addictive chemical that affects the developing brain and increases risk of future addiction.

- » Common harmful ingredients
 - » Nicotine: Highly addictive; impacts brain development in those under 25.
 - » Formaldehyde: Found in cleaning liquids, known carcinogen.
 - » Acetone: Found in nail polish remover.
 - » Benzene: Found in weed killer and bug spray.
- » One vape cartridge = nicotine in 1-2 cigarette packs!

HEALTH RISKS FOR CHILDREN

- » Mouth and gum disease
- » Throat irritation, headaches, nausea
- » Nicotine poisoning (can cause seizures – call 000 if severe)
- » Lung injury (EVALI) and long-term respiratory issues
- » Impaired brain and mental health development
- » Increased likelihood of cigarette smoking later in life

WHAT PARENTS AND CARERS CAN DO

- » Start the conversation early and talk openly about the risks of vaping.
- » Be informed: Know what vapes look like, many resemble USB sticks or pens.
- » Model healthy habits: Children learn from adult behaviour.
- » Stay calm and supportive: If your child is vaping, focus on understanding why and offer help, not punishment.

WHAT PARENTS AND CARERS CAN DO

- » View vaping as a health issue, not a disciplinary one.
- » Take a whole-of-school preventive approach - discuss vaping openly in health education.
- » Set clear expectations and support students who may be struggling with nicotine dependence.
- » Avoid punitive approaches like suspensions or searches that may increase disengagement.
- » Integrate vaping education into broader drug and alcohol programs, starting in primary school.
- » Focus on reducing uptake, not punishing behaviour - avoid normalising vaping through overemphasis.

NEED SUPPORT

- » Quitline (13 7848) - Free, confidential advice for parents, carers, and young people.
- » Better Health Channel: betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- » Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) - For children seeking support.



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