

## I'm worried about my child vaping

It's common for parents to worry about their children trying smoking, alcohol or drugs as they get older. However, in recent years, more young people have been using e-cigarettes, known as vaping. Children are trying vaping younger than ever and the risks are less well known than with other substances.

If you think your child might be vaping or you're worried they might start, it's important to understand what it is and what the risks are so you can talk to them about it. Most children and young people do not vape or smoke on a regular basis over a long period of time, but they might try it. Keeping them informed about the risks, will help them to make healthy choices for themselves.



### What is vaping?

Vaping is inhaling vapour from an e-cigarette or 'vape'.

The vape is a battery powered device which heats a cartridge of liquid. It is the vapour from this liquid that is inhaled. You can get refillable vapes where you can fill it with different flavour liquids, or disposable vapes. These come in a variety of colours and flavours making them popular with young people.

Most vapes contain nicotine which makes them highly addictive. Vapes are intended for adults who smoke to help them give up smoking, like nicotine patches or gum. They are less harmful than cigarettes because they don't contain tobacco, however they still contain harmful ingredients. If you have never smoked, you shouldn't vape.

E-cigarettes and liquids are sold in vape shops, newsagents, supermarkets and many other shops. It is illegal to sell vaping products to anyone under the age of 18 or to buy them on their behalf, however like cigarettes and other substances, young people still manage to get hold of them.

### Why is my child vaping?

The reasons children and young people try vaping are similar to any other drug or substance:

- To fit in. Many young people feel pressured to do what their friends are doing. Social status is seen as being very important to teenagers.
- To relieve stress. Young people are often under a lot of stress, from school, work, and relationships. Nicotine can have a temporary calming effect.
- Curiosity. They have probably seen or heard about other people vaping and want to know what it's like.

Vaping has an extra appeal for children and young people because:

- They come in sweet smelling flavours and bright colours.
- They see them as less harmful than smoking because of the messaging about them helping people to stop smoking.
- They are more discrete than smoking because the smell doesn't last as long and they can be easily hidden.

## What are the risks of vaping for children and young people?

- The short-term side effects of vaping include throat and mouth irritation, headache, cough and feeling sick.
- The long-term effects of vaping are still unknown, they are still too new for there to have been proper research.
- Nicotine is highly addictive. There is also a risk when non-smokers try vaping, they might move on to try more harmful cigarettes and drugs.
- There are also illegal vapes being sold that contain dangerous levels of lead, nickel and chromium.

## How do I talk to my child about vaping?

- Find a good time to start the conversation. It might be as you walk past a vape shop or see someone using an e-cigarette.
- Ask your child what they know about vaping. You can ask them if they know of people who use them and why they use them. You might ask them if they've ever tried it.
- Listen to your child, their experience, and their point of view. Show you are interested in what they have to say.
- Then you can gently and calmly give them some facts about vaping. Ask them what they think about the facts.
- If your child is already using a vape, then have the same conversation with them and ask them what they like about it. You are not saying it's okay for them to do it, by being interested. You can still be clear about how you feel.
- If they feel pressured into vaping by friends, you can teach them helpful skills of being confident in saying 'no thanks, it's not for me'.