

Vaping and Young People

For Educators

Though tobacco smoking has fallen out of favour amongst Australian youth in recent years, we've witnessed the rise of a popular alternative: 'vaping'.

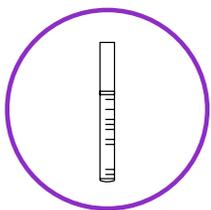
This resource is designed to fill the knowledge gap around vaping and e-cigarettes, to provide current research and information, and to empower schools and educators to inform and protect young people from potential harm. As Australia's most trusted lung health charity, Lung Foundation Australia continues to champion the best outcomes around lung health and is concerned about the large and avoidable burden of disease that may result from vaping and e-cigarette use.

This resource caters specifically to teachers, educators and anyone working with young people to supply clear, evidence-based information on vaping, its health, safety and legal issues, and how it directly impacts lung health. It covers statistics on e-cigarette usage in Australia, why young people take it up, the types of vaping equipment available and common misconceptions. It will also provide practical tips on how to engage with young people on the topic in different settings.

What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of smoking e-cigarettes, or 'vapes', which are lithium battery-powered devices that look like metallic wands, USBs or other hand-held devices. Vapes use cartridges filled with liquids, or 'juice', which typically contain nicotine, artificial flavourings and various chemicals. The liquid is heated into an aerosol, or vapour, and inhaled into the user's lungs.

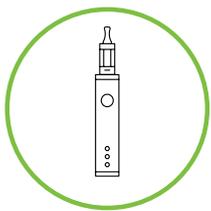
The range of vape and e-cigarette choices have evolved rapidly in recent years, with many models and liquid flavours. Vapes use two main delivery systems: Electronic Nicotine Delivery (ENDS) and Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery (ENNDS). They generally come in three main categories: minis, closed pods, and refillables. Types of vapes include:



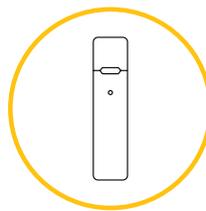
Minis – also known as 'cigalikes', Cuvides, BIDI Sticks or Stif. These are made to look like a normal cigarette and are disposable.



Refillable systems – also known as Mods, Tanks or APVs. These are newer models with more settings and longer battery life. The vape juice is re-filled into the device's tank.



Closed pod e-cigs – these look like minis, but aren't disposable. The liquid 'pod' is replaced with another when it runs out.



Other brands – there are also some closed pod brands such as JUUL which can be charged in a USB slot.

It's worth highlighting that non-nicotine systems can be just as harmful due to the toxins they use. Though safe to ingest, these toxins may be very unsafe to inhale. These products lack proper testing, and **often still contain nicotine even if they claim to be free of it.**

Attraction for young people

The novelty nature of these devices, the influence of a direct family member or friend who vapes and the incorrect perception that vaping is relatively harmless – particularly compared to regular cigarettes – are amongst the top reasons why young people take the activity up. Over recent years viral online trends involving vapes have become increasingly popular and rates of vaping amongst young people is steadily rising. The flavours available, such as mango and peppermint, smell enticing and taste better than combustible tobacco. This is another key drawcard for young people.

The accessibility and affordability also makes them attractive. Though restricted in Australia, vape equipment can easily be obtained through online channels, and remains a cheaper option than cigarettes. Sophisticated marketing through social media and online channels has been successful in glamourising vaping.

Health risks and harms

Vaping is unsafe and potentially dangerous. While the long-term health effects are still relatively unknown, we do know that vaping in the short-term has been associated with nausea, vomiting, mouth and airway irritation, chest pain and heart palpitations.

There is a common misconception that vaping is merely harmless water vapour – in fact, it's an aerosol made up of tiny toxic particles. While this aerosol might have fewer chemical additives than combustible tobacco products, it still contains and emits many harmful compounds, including:



Formaldehyde and acrolein, which can cause irreversible lung damage.



Propylene glycol, which is toxic to human cells.

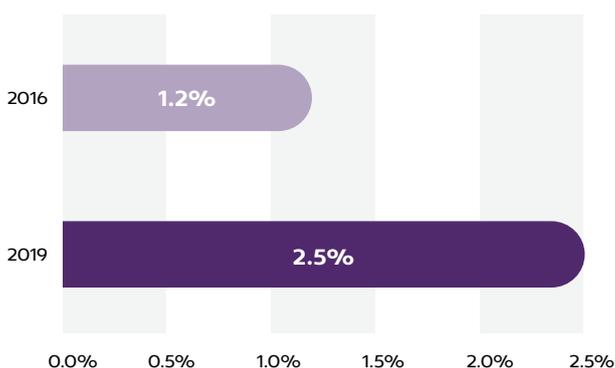


Nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm the still-developing adolescent brain, particularly in areas that control attention, learning, mood and behavioural control.

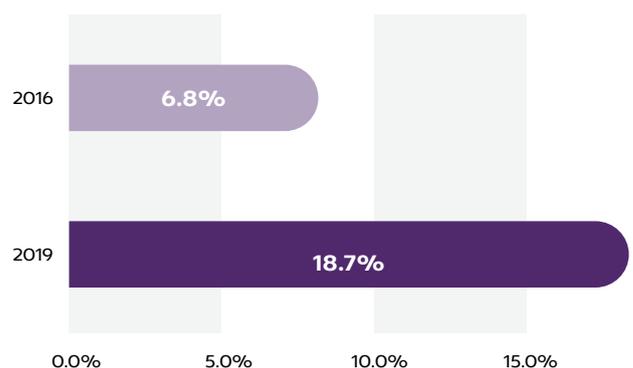
Additionally, vaping is associated with the future uptake of cigarette smoking and can be considered a 'gateway' to further risk and health complications.

Vaping in Australia

Australians aged 14 or older who use e-cigarettes



Vaping amongst 18-24 year olds who smoke



Vaping use is on the rise in Australia. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, e-cigarette use by Australians aged 14 or older has more than doubled from 2016 to 2019 and is most common among smokers aged 18-24 at 18.7% (an increase from 6.8% in 2016).

With the exception of Western Australia, each state and territory permits the sale of vapes and e-cigarettes, but not the sale or purchase of liquid flavours that contain nicotine. For this reason, most users purchase their products and liquids online. Doctors in Australia can prescribe vape nicotine as a means of weaning off tobacco use, though there is little evidence that vaping is successful in achieving this outcome.



Vaping and schools

As teachers, educators and those working in learning settings, the best advice is to address vaping as part of a broader social, health and drug education context. Implement comprehensive tobacco and vape-free policies campus-wide that run alongside education and support programs, particularly for those young people who are already nicotine addicted. Teachers, support staff and administrators should also be up to speed on the latest knowledge, including the types of vapes on the market and the risks they pose.



Teaching activities

Sometimes it's challenging to know where to start when engaging with your students around an issue such as vaping. Below are some suggested activities that teachers from across the country have found effective.

What do I know?

A quiz to test students' prior knowledge on vaping and debunk some misconceptions around its safety. Quizzes are a great way to start off a topic and get students interested. After each question there could be an explanation giving some more information to the participant. An example of a question could be: 'Vape nicotine is illegal in Australia - true or false?'. Then go on to explain about the legal parameters around vaping. Students can then record three things that they have learned which can form the basis of class discussion.

Why do people vape?

Exploring the motivation for undertaking risk behaviours is always important in drug and alcohol education. Have an initial brainstorm with the class around why they think young people chose to vape and use this information to help facilitate a class discussion. There could then be a follow-up activity where students work in groups to establish how to respond to and counteract these reasons and look at what support is on offer to help people quit.

Comparison to tobacco

Like cigarette smoking was a few decades ago, vaping may be viewed by students as cool or fun. When teaching about tobacco explore the history of smoking, how perceptions have changed due to greater understanding of what smoking does to our health, the health of those around us and the environment. You could then encourage the students to compare what people thought about smoking 30 years ago and see if there are similarities with vaping now. Pose a question such as: 'In 30 years, what could be understood about the long-term health consequences of vaping?'

Impact of vaping

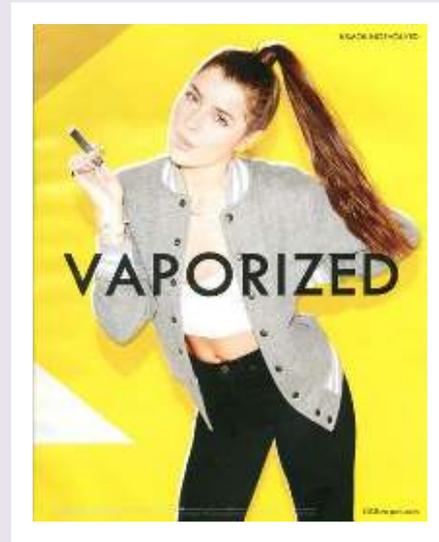
Look at the social, emotional, financial and physical harms of vaping. It could be as simple as a venn diagram worksheet for students.

Role play scenarios

Provide scenarios around vaping. These may include a situation involving peer pressure to vape at a party, being offered a vape by a friend when out, and talking to an older sibling or friend about the harms of vaping. Students then use these scenarios to role play appropriate/harm minimising behaviours to help create a positive outcome. Role plays are a good tool to practice protective behaviours such as refusal skills and help seeking.

Vaping advertisement - critical thinking activity

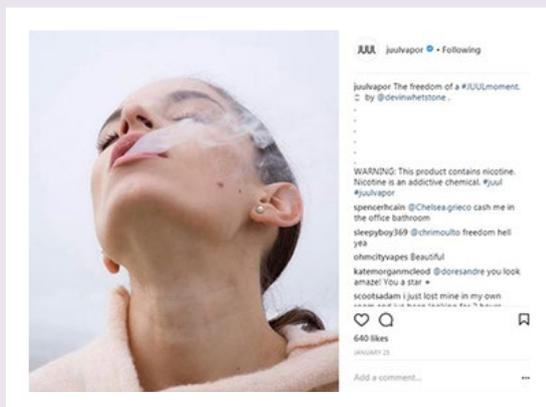
Provide students with e-cigarette advertisements like the ones below and ask them to deconstruct the target audience, the motive/intended message, effectiveness of the advertisement and why. What techniques did the companies use to advertise their product, and what impact can this type of advertisement have on young people's decisions about vaping.



Accessed from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathleenchaykowski/2018/11/16/the-disturbing-focus-of-juuls-early-marketing-campaigns/?sh=5672b9e814f9>



Accessed from: <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/e-cigarettes-facts-stats-and-regulations>



Accessed from: <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/tobacco-industry-marketing/4-marketing-tactics-e-cigarette-companies-use-target>



Other settings

Duty of care around vaping and e-cigarettes also extends to sporting, community, arts and service organisations, and any setting where responsibility exists for young people's wellbeing.

Teachers, facilitators and support staff should read up on the latest knowledge on vaping, and the best ways to approach youth about the issues and harm it can cause.

Tips for talking with young people about vaping

It's crucial to be patient, avoid criticism and be open and honest when confronting young people about vaping. There should be an emphasis on easy discussion and mutual receptivity in a safe, caring and understanding space. Stick with the facts, steer clear of overreaction and keep the emotion out of it.

A good method is to assist young people to make their own informed decisions around the issue. Emphasise the way in which the tobacco industry covertly manipulates them through glossy imagery and savvy marketing. If nicotine addiction is involved, work with them in an open and honest healing space and build rapport to start getting them the help they need.

Above all, always deal with the facts, make sure to underline the health issues and demonstrate authentic care in a non-judgmental setting.

Additional information and resources

Check your state or territory government health and education websites for information, advice and policy positions. Here are some examples of evidence-based resources and information.

Government resources

National

[About e-cigarettes](#)

ACT

[Electronic Cigarettes](#)

[Health impacts of e-cigarettes for children, young people and adults](#)

NT

[Electronic Cigarettes](#)

NSW

[E-cigarettes and young people](#)

QLD

[Electronic Cigarettes](#)

[The known harms of e-cigarettes and vaping](#)

VIC

[Smoking and Vaping Ban](#)

SA

[New e-cigarette laws and other changes to tobacco laws in South Australia](#)

[Vaping and oral health](#)

TAS

[Electronic Cigarettes](#)

[E-Cigarettes](#)

WA

[Electronic cigarettes in Western Australia](#)

[Health effects of vaping](#)

Health and education resources

| Organisation | Resource |
|--|---|
| Alcohol and Drug Foundation | Vaping amongst young people |
| Better Health Channel | E-Cigarettes |
| Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia | Vaping Resources for Teachers |
| healthdirect | E-cigarettes (Vaping) |
| Positive Choices | Electronic Cigarettes and Vaping |
| School News Australia | Staving off the teen vaping epidemic |
| School Drug Education and Road Aware | E-cigarettes - Resources for school staff |
| The Catholic Weekly | Vaping: Sorting out 'fact from fiction' for those parents struggling with the issue |
| The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne | E-cigarettes and teens |
| Scholastic | The real cost of vaping |
| Smokefree Teen | Quit Vaping |
| YouthNow | E-cigarette and Vaping Resources |



This fact sheet has been developed as part of a suite of vaping resources. Additional fact sheets for parents and carers, teens, and young adults are also available. To find out more and to access information and support, contact Lung Foundation Australia.

Free call 1800 654 301
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Email enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au