



Vaping

What is vaping?

Vaping is the word used to describe the act of breathing in a vapour from an electronic device. The heating coil inside this device heats a liquid turning it into a vapour which the user inhales.

Health New Zealand says vaping is not for non-smokers and young people, but it has the potential to help smokers quit. Scientists agree that there is limited evidence that proves vaping is effective in helping people to quit smoking.

What is a vape device?

Vape devices are also known as e-cigarettes. They come in many shapes and sizes. Most have a battery, a tank (or cartridge) that can be refilled with liquid, and a coil (heating element) that heats the vapour.

Vapes are known by many different names. They are sometimes called “e-cigarettes,” “e-cigs,” “e-hookahs,” “mods,” “vape pens,” “puff bars,” and “electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).”

Some e-cigarettes look like regular cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Most look like USB flash drives and other everyday items, like a coloured highlighter.



What's in the liquid?

The vaping liquid (also called e-liquid) can be made from a mixture of things, for example chemicals like propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine, plus flavours and the option of nicotine which is available in different strengths. Different flavours are added for personal preference. Some of the chemicals added are known to cause cancer. The intense heating of the vaping liquid creates many more toxic chemicals.

Respiratory specialists are worried about the flavourings that are used. Our lungs are extremely delicate and fragile. Foods may be safe to eat and digest through the stomach but that does not mean that these flavourings and chemicals are safe in the lungs.



What's in the vapour?

E-cigarette vapour is NOT harmless “water vapour.”

The vapour that a person breathes, and exhales can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including:

- Nicotine
- Ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- Flavourings such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease
- Organic compounds
- Cancer causing chemicals



It can be difficult for people to know what their vaping products contain. Some vapes marketed as containing zero per cent nicotine have been found to contain nicotine. (1)

Nicotine

Nicotine is addictive because it affects part of the brain that is involved in ‘rewarding behaviour’.

Vapes can vary from no nicotine to high nicotine. The high nicotine liquids can contain more nicotine per use than a standard cigarette. Addiction to nicotine can make people feel irritable, restless, unable to concentrate, and most experience cravings when they go without it. Having nicotine takes away these symptoms, and this means people can get stuck in a cycle of addiction.

Nicotine has some side effects, like nausea and vomiting. Non-smokers could experience this but smokers become used to these types of effects over time. Nicotine can also have some negative effects on brain development in adolescents. Using nicotine in adolescents may also increase the risk for future addiction to other drugs. (2)

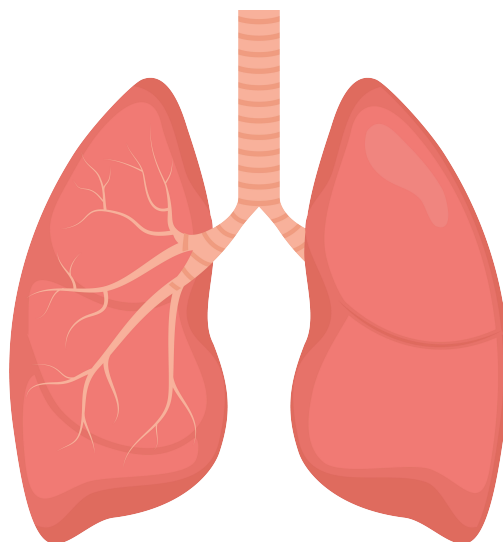
Risks of vaping

The biggest risks of vaping are the unknown risks. Vaping hasn't been around long enough to know the risks of long-term use and scientists are still learning about these but the available science shows they contain harmful and potentially harmful ingredients. Young people are especially at risk while the body is still developing.

The lungs are extremely delicate. Breathing any product into your lungs unnecessarily is not ideal and that's why non-smokers should not start to vape.

There are side effects to vaping. These depend on how much the person vapes and what vape juice they choose. The most common side effects of vaping (inhaling the vapour) include:

- Coughing
- Dry mouth and throat
- Shortness of breath
- Mouth and throat irritation
- Headaches



Vaping laws and policy

There are laws in place to cover a range of things including advertising, product safety, nicotine strength, flavour descriptions, and product packaging. The last of these laws came into place in June 2025.

It is an offence to sell vaping products to people under 18. Specialist vape stores must take steps to prevent a person under the age of 18 from entering their store and must be over 300m away from schools and marae.

It is also illegal for vape retailers to sell **disposable vapes**.



It is against the law for vape retailers to sell **reusable vapes** that contain more than 28.5mg/mL of nicotine, don't have a child safety mechanism, or comply with new labelling requirements and flavour descriptions. There are to be no vape products sold with cartoons or toys on the packaging.

People cannot vape in legislated smokefree areas. The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 does not allow vaping to take place in indoor workplaces, and the entire grounds and buildings of schools and early childhood centres – they are smokefree and vape-free places.

Sources

1. Goniewicz ML, Gupta R, Lee YH, et al. Nicotine levels in electronic cigarette refill solutions: a comparative analysis of products from the United States, Korea, and Poland. *Int J Drug Policy*. 2015;26(6):583–588.
2. US Department of Health and Human Services. E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General [PDF – 8.47MB]. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2016. Accessed July 27, 2018.

References

- [Don't Get Sucked In | Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ](#)
- [The facts of vaping | Vaping Facts | Ministry of Health and Health New Zealand](#)
- [Vaping - smokefree environments and regulated products | Ministry of Health NZ](#)
- [Protect Your Breath | Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu Ora](#)



Want to learn more about vaping?

Visit the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation NZ website:

dontgetsuckedin.co.nz

This resource has been kindly reviewed by:

