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**NHS**

# Vaping – the facts and health risks

Information for young people



This booklet has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about vaping. It explains the risks of vaping. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional.

Adapted from the King's College Hospital leaflet 'Vaping harm in adolescents'.



## ? What are vapes?

- ▶ Vapes (also known as e-cigarettes) are devices that heat up a liquid that you can then breathe in as a vapour.
- ▶ The liquid usually contains nicotine, flavourings and other chemicals.
- ▶ Vapes can be reusable or single-use and come in many flavours.
- ▶ Flavoured vapour can seem appealing, but it can still contain potentially harmful chemicals.



## i Facts about vaping

- ▶ Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical and dependence can happen quickly.
- ▶ When you try to stop, you may feel anxious, irritable and have strong cravings.
- ▶ Vaping can make it more likely that young people will go on to smoke cigarettes later.
- ▶ Some vapes are sold as nicotine-free, but can still be harmful.



## ♥ Heart harm

- ▶ Chemicals in vape liquids can inflame blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart problems.
- ▶ Nicotine can make blood vessels stiffer, which may lead to high blood pressure.
- ▶ It also makes the heart beat faster and, with frequent vaping, can lead to chest pain.



## 🧠 Mental health

- ▶ Nicotine can increase anxiety and make it harder to manage stress.
- ▶ It can cause mood swings that may affect friendships and school performance.
- ▶ In young people, nicotine can harm brain development, making it harder to concentrate, learn and control impulses.





## Toxic substances in vapes

**Heavy metals:** Vapes can release harmful metals such as lead, nickel and chromium from the heating element. These can damage the lungs, kidneys, liver and nervous system.

**Formaldehyde:** Some vape liquids can produce formaldehyde, a chemical known to cause cancer and irritate the lungs, eyes and throat.

**Acrolein:** Found in some vapes and used as a pesticide, acrolein can cause irreversible lung damage and is linked to an increased risk of heart disease.



## Second-hand vapour

- ▶ Even if you do not vape yourself, breathing in other people's vapour can still affect your health.
- ▶ If you have asthma, second-hand vapour may worsen your symptoms and could trigger an asthma attack.



## Environment

- ▶ All vapes are harmful to the environment.
- ▶ Disposable vapes create plastic, battery and electronic waste.
- ▶ Vapes also contain lithium, a valuable resource needed for technologies such as electric cars, but it is wasted when used in disposable devices.



## Good advice

- ▶ The best choice for your lungs, heart and brain is not to vape at all.
- ▶ There is no safe level of nicotine exposure for children and young people.
- ▶ Be confident about saying 'no' if someone offers you a vape – it shows you are in control.
- ▶ Talk to a trusted adult if you feel pressured to vape.
- ▶ Ask for help: if you are struggling with cravings or think you may be dependent on vaping, support is available. Talk to your GP, school nurse or another healthcare professional.





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# Need help or more information?



Healthier Together provides trusted NHS advice for parents, carers and young people.

Visit: [www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk](http://www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk)



You can also talk to your GP, school nurse, pharmacist or another healthcare professional.



## If you feel unwell after vaping

- Seek urgent medical help if you have chest pain, severe shortness of breath, wheeze that is not settling, fainting, or you feel seriously unwell.
- For urgent advice, use NHS 111 or your local urgent care services.

## Further information



Talk to FRANK:  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)



Healthier Together:  
[www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk](http://www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk)



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