

Youth Vaping



This set of frequently asked questions is to support parents and carers to have a conversation with their children about vaping.

1. What is vaping?

Vaping describes the use of a vape which delivers an inhalable aerosol by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerine, distilled water, plus flavourings. Unlike cigarettes, vapes do not burn and therefore no smoke or other harmful products of burning, such as tar and carbon monoxide are produced. Vapes are a lot less harmful than tobacco and are thought to be the most successful product in helping people to quit smoking. However, vapes are not recommended for anyone who has never smoked.

Vapes were more commonly known as e-cigarettes, however, as there are so many different devices which do not look like a cigarette, they are now referred to as vapes or vaping devices.

2. What are the health risks of vaping?

Evidence shows that vaping is a lot less harmful than smoking as they produce less harmful substances. However, as they have only been around for quite a short amount of time, we do not know the long-term effects of vaping. Short-term effects can include coughing, dizziness, headaches, and a sore throat. In addition, young people that choose to vape may become addicted to the nicotine, which can lead to irritability, anxiety, trouble sleeping and difficulty concentrating. Therefore, vapes are not recommended for use by children and young people under 18, or anyone who has never smoked.

3. Is passive vaping harmful?

Unlike second-hand (passive) tobacco smoke, there is no existing evidence that exposure to the exhaled vapour from vaping would cause significant harm to others.

4. Is vaping harmful if you have asthma?

People with a lung condition, such as asthma may be sensitive to the vapour from vapes as well as from tobacco smoke. If your child's asthma control worsens, they should follow the guidance in their Asthma Action Plan and have a review with their asthma health care professional. The following are signs of poor asthma control:

- Asthma symptoms more than 2 times a week
- Using their reliever inhaler more than 2 times a week
- Any sleep disturbance due to asthma
- Any limitation on usual activities

Further advice and support about asthma is available from [Asthma + Lung UK](https://www.asthma.org.uk).



5. What is the legal age to purchase vapes?

In the UK it's against the law to sell vaping products to anyone under the age of 18. This also includes vaping products that are nicotine-free. It is also against the law for someone 18 or older to buy vaping products on behalf of anyone underage.

6. Is it against the law to vape indoors?

Currently there are no laws on vaping indoors or outdoors in public. However, local establishments are free to make their own rules on vaping on their site, which may prevent people from doing so.

7. How many young people vape in the UK?

The latest research showed that 20% of 11 – 17 year olds have tried vaping. However, the findings suggest that most youth vaping is experimental, with much lower levels (4%) of regular use, which means more than once a week.

8. What types of vape are young people likely to use?

Disposable (single use) vapes have been the most popular vape for young people aged 11-17 years old, especially brands like Elf Bar, Lost Mary, and Crystal Bar. However, from 1 June 2025 the sale or supply of disposable vapes became illegal (against the law) in the UK. Therefore, any disposable vape sold after this date is illegal, may not meet UK safety standards, and could be unsafe to use. See questions 14 & 15 for more information on illegal vapes.

9. What is vape spiking?

Vape spiking involves lacing a vape with an unknown substance to administer it into a 'victim's' body without their consent. Although vape spiking isn't a common occurrence, the number of reported incidents has increased over the last couple of years. For this reason, anyone who chooses to vape should not accept a stranger's vape or share their vape with a stranger.

10. At what age should I talk to my child about vaping?

Having a conversation about vaping with your child, should take place as they finish primary school and start secondary school, so around 10 or 11 years old. This is when they are most likely to be first introduced to vapes by other children. Leaving having a conversation to when they are older, might mean they have already tried vaping or seen their friends trying them.

It's important to pick the right moment to talk to your child about vaping - perhaps when you see someone vaping or see an advert for vapes. Encourage your child to be open and honest with you, ask them:

- what do they think about vaping?
- do they know anyone who vapes?

11. How do I know if my child is vaping?

Research suggests that the majority (75%) of 11 - 17-year-olds do not regularly vape, this means vape more than once a week, and just under 7% have never tried a vape. Therefore, it is unlikely that your child does vape, and even less likely that they vape regularly.

Unlike smoking, vaping doesn't leave much of a smell, so if your child vapes, it might be hard to spot. Keep an eye out for brightly coloured vapes (you may think they are a marker pen), you may find e-liquid bottles (about the size of eye-drop or ear-drop bottles). If any of those turn up in bins, bags, or pockets, it might be time for a chat.



12. I've found out my child is vaping; how do I talk to them about it?

Having an open and honest conversation is usually the best way. Choose a time when your child is feeling calm and unthreatened. Stay relaxed and listen to what they have to say. Try and understand their point of view before you challenge them. Remember, most young people that vape do it to just give it a go or because their peers vape, so they want to join in. Having a chat with them may prevent them from becoming regular vapers. Ask them about the reasons why they are vaping.

- What do they enjoy about vaping?
- Are they experiencing peer pressure or bullying?
- Is it their choice?

Understanding the reasons why your child is vaping will help you to understand their needs and therefore ways in which you can help them. Tell them your concerns and help them to understand that although vaping is safer than smoking, they are not completely risk free and there is no good reason for anyone to vape unless it is to quit smoking.

If your child is choosing to vape, try to find out where they are getting them from. It's possible that your child is using illegal vapes that are not compliant with UK standards and possibly unsafe. See questions 14 & 15 for more information on illegal vapes.

13. What support is available to help my child quit vaping?

If your child vapes and wants to quit but needs help, their School Nurse can provide them with support to stop. If you don't know how to contact your School Nurse, ask at the school office. Alternatively, if they are under 18 they can access support from Dudley's Young Person's Wellbeing & Substance Use Service, [Here4YOUth](#).

14. What are the dangers of illegal vapes?

In the UK, all vape products must meet strict legal and safety standards. This includes limits on nicotine strength (maximum 20mg/ml or 2%), tank size (maximum 2ml), and banned additives.

However, many illegal vapes break these rules. Some have tank sizes far above the legal limit and may contain up to 50mg of nicotine—more than double the UK maximum. If a vape advertises more than 600 puffs, it is likely to be illegal and unregulated.

Illegal vapes may contain harmful ingredients banned in the UK, and there is no guarantee they are safe.

The best way to ensure a product is legal is to buy from a trustworthy retailer, such as a vape specialist, pharmacy, or supermarket. But because vapes are age-restricted, under-18s are unlikely to access them through legal shops—increasing the risk that young people get illegal or unsafe products from unregulated sources.

If you suspect a retailer is selling illegal vapes, you can report it to Dudley Trading Standards through the [Citizens Advice Consumer Service](#), 0808 223 1133 (freephone).



15. How can you distinguish between a legal and illegal vape?

Illegal vapes often lack quality due to cheaper manufacturing costs and the packaging may look substandard. The illegal devices tend to have missing information, like health warnings, batch details and hazard warnings. Here's a check list to consider when buying vape products.

Legal vapes must be all of the following:

- Rechargeable – Must have a battery that can be recharged.
- Refillable – You must be able to refill it with e-liquid or replace the pod.
- Replaceable coil or pod – The heating element (coil) must be replaceable or part of a swappable pod.

If a vape doesn't meet all three, it's illegal to sell in the UK.

Common signs of an illegal vape, include:

- Pre-filled and sealed: If you can't open or refill it, it's likely to be illegal
- No charging port or fake USB ports: Some illegal vapes have unusable ports
- No replaceable coil or pod
- Claims of 600+ puffs: Legal UK vapes are limited to 2ml tanks, which usually give up to 600 puffs. Anything claiming 1000+, 3000+, or 5000+ puffs is almost certainly illegal
- No nicotine warning label: Legal products must display a clear warning: "*This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance*"
- No manufacturer or batch info: Legal vapes must be traceable

16. I've heard that a local shop is selling vapes to under-18s what should I do?

To report a trader that's supplying age restricted products, such as vapes, to under 18s, you can notify Dudley Trading Standards through the [Citizens Advice Consumer Service](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer), 0808 223 1133 (freephone).

There have been some reports across England and Wales that vapes have been supplied to underage children by shops and other businesses to groom them for sexual exploitation. If you are concerned that the supply of vapes to a young person could be the result of an inappropriate relationship the police should be informed.

17. My child has been approached via social media platforms to buy vapes, what should I do?

Any complaints about inappropriate advertising and promotion of vaping to under-18s, for example on social media such as Tik Tok, Snapchat or Instagram, should be made to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) through the online complaints portal.