



Facts About Vapes (e-cigarettes) 1: Vaping as a Smoking Cessation Aid

What are vapes (e-cigarettes)?

E-cigarettes, or vapes, are devices that heat a liquid to make an aerosol that users breathe in (vaping). Vapes are also called e-cigs, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), or alternative nicotine delivery systems (ANDS). They are battery operated and come in a range of shapes and sizes. Some look like tobacco products such as cigarettes or cigars. Others resemble everyday items like pens, lipsticks or USBs. Vapes contain a range of chemicals including flavourings. They may or may not contain nicotine – even if nicotine is not listed as on the ingredients label. They are sometimes marketed as a way to help people quit smoking.



Vaping and the law

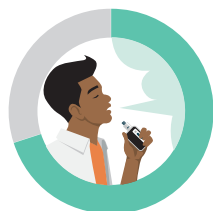
In Australia, you must have a valid prescription to buy nicotine vapes or nicotine refills. Nicotine vapes are available in some pharmacies, and from online stores. They are not available in other shops. From 1st October 2021, a valid prescription is also needed to import nicotine vapes and nicotine refills. This includes from an online store, or when travelling to Australia from overseas. More information can be found on the TGA website.⁷

Vaping is also covered by state and territory tobacco control laws. For example, it is illegal to vape in legislated smoke-free areas. Find out more about vaping laws in your state or territory:

- ACT⁸
- NSW⁹
- NT¹⁰
- QLD¹¹
- SA¹²
- TAS¹³
- VIC¹⁴
- WA¹⁵

Can vaping help someone to quit?

There is not enough evidence to show vaping is an effective method for smoking cessation. International evidence tells us that:



70%

70% of people who 'vape to quit' carry on vaping on a long-term basis (switching, not quitting)¹



50%

Around 50% of people who vape smoke tobacco as well as vaping (dual use)²



0%

Vapes are no more effective than established approaches such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), Champix®, or going cold turkey³



3X

Recent evidence also suggests people who use vaping to quit are around three times more likely to relapse than those who do not.⁴

A Cochrane Review of the safety and effectiveness of vapes for quitting (November 2022)⁵ claimed that quit rates were higher in people randomised to nicotine vaping products (NVPs) compared to people randomised to NRT. However, participants in the reviewed studies who used NVPs quit smoking cigarettes, but continued with their nicotine dependence. That is, they switched from smoking cigarettes to vaping, to satisfy their nicotine habit. Vaping is not risk free and we do not yet know the long-term effects of vaping. While there may be some health gains from switching, the largest possible health gains will come from total abstinence from both commercial tobacco products and novel nicotine delivery products such as NVPs. Further information about the risks of vaping is available in the second factsheet in this series: Health Outcomes and Other Risks of Vaping.

Using NVPs as a smoking cessation aid is not recommended as a first-line treatment. In Australia, nicotine vapes are known as 'unapproved medicines' because they have not been tested for safety and efficacy by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Currently in Australia:

- There are no NVPs listed on the Register of Therapeutic Goods
- Nicotine vapes can only be prescribed as a quit smoking aid by a registered doctor, under a special access scheme.

Further information can be found in The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) guidelines on smoking cessation⁶.



1 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743522002316>

2 <https://smokinginengland.info/graphs/e-cigarettes-latest-trends>

3 <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2022/01/11/tobaccocontrol-2021-056901>

4 <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2023/04/10/tc-2022-057728>

5 https://www.cochrane.org/CD010216/TOBACCO_can-electronic-cigarettes-help-people-stop-smoking-and-do-they-have-any-unwanted-effects-when-used

6 <https://www.racgp.org.au/clinical-resources/clinical-guidelines/key-racgp-guidelines/view-all-racgp-guidelines/supporting-smoking-cessation>

7 <https://www.tga.gov.au/products/medicines/prescription-medicines/nicotine-vaping-products-hub>

8 <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/smoke-free-environments/electronic-cigarettes>

9 <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/e-cigarettes.aspx>

10 <https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/healthy-living/smoking>

11 <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/atods/smoking/devices>

12 <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Public+health/Tobacco+and+e-cigarette+laws+and+businesses/New+e-cigarette+laws+and+other+changes+to+tobacco+laws+in+South+Australia>

13 <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/smoking/smoking-topics/e-cigarettes>

14 <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/e-cigarettes>

15 https://www.healthysa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Electronic-cigarettes-e-cigarettes