






Young people and vaping

What are e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes, vapes or vape pens are battery powered devices that heat a liquid, often containing nicotine, flavourings, vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol, into a vapour that is inhaled by the user.

There are many varieties of e-cigarettes as shown below.

<p>E-cigarette devices vary greatly and are evolving rapidly</p> <p>There is also a variety of “generations” of e-cigarettes that differ according to technology and how they are designed to be used.</p>	<p>Vape pens</p> <p>These enable users to vary e-liquid formulations according to their preferences. Some use pre-filled cartridges while others allow users to refill them.</p> 
<p>Cig-a-likes</p> <p>These are disposables that have the look and feel of conventional cigarettes. This may renormalise smoking.</p> 	<p>Tank systems</p> <p>These enable users to vary almost every element of the user experience, including e-liquid formulations and battery power.</p> 
<p>Disposables</p> <p>These are the latest version of disposable e-cigarettes, often shaped like pods, but are meant to be discarded after the e-liquid has been used. They are available in a wide variety of flavours and are also concealable.</p> 	<p>Pods</p> <p>These are the newer generation of e-cigarettes. Because this generation often uses nicotine salts, these provide higher doses of nicotine without a harsh sensation. The device often looks like USB sticks allowing users (e.g. young people or students) to conceal them.</p> 

Source: WHO Report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2021. Addressing new and emerging products

Many vapes are bright and colourful and there are thousands of e-liquid flavours available, increasing their attractiveness to children and young people.

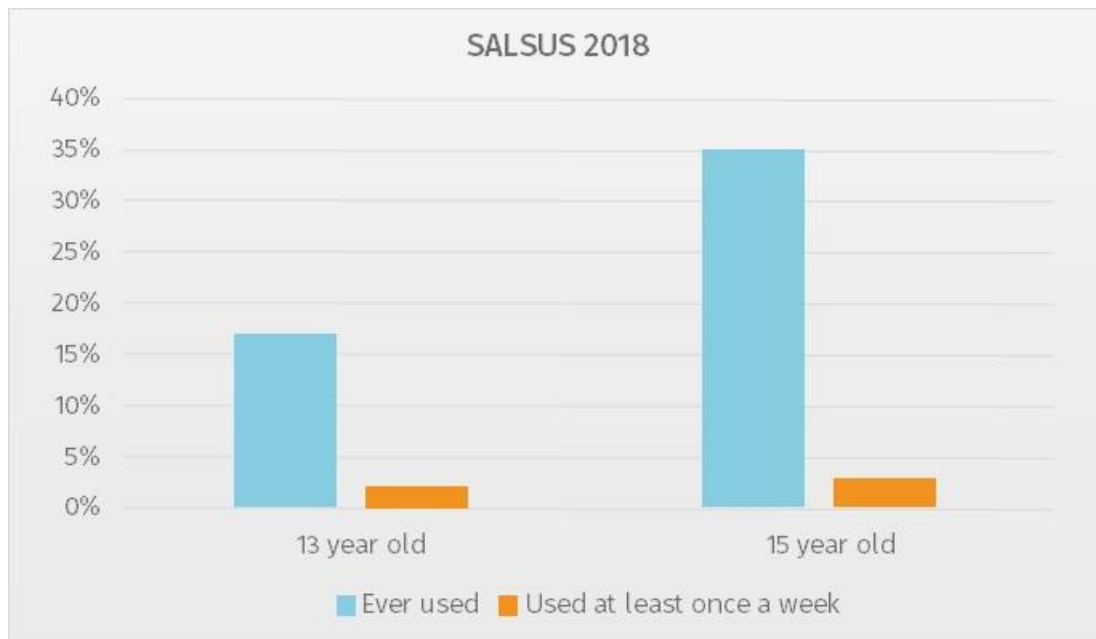
New higher delivery nicotine products like Juul2 have increased concerns that a new generation may become addicted to nicotine. The technology, design and range of products is rapidly evolving.

Some of these products do not contain nicotine, however there are still concerns related to the e-liquids and delivery methods which can contain or produce harmful ingredients and may have both short and long-term health impacts. Testing has found some e-liquids that are marked as nicotine-free, to contain nicotine.

Are young people using e-cigarettes?

Reports from those working with young people suggest they are becoming increasingly concerned about children as young as seven and young people using vapes.

There is limited data on children and young people using e-cigarettes in Scotland. As the graph below shows, latest figures indicate that 17% of 13 year olds and 35% of 15 year olds have used an e-cigarette. However only 2% of 13 year olds and 3% of 15 year olds used them at least once a week (SALSUS 2018).



It is likely that figures are higher than those reported, and more current data is urgently required.

Vaping rates amongst young people in North America, Canada, New Zealand and China have been flagged as concerns in recent years, with rates often higher than tobacco smoking.

Research suggests young people are purchasing e-cigarettes in shops, online, buying from friends or are given them by others.

Government policies around advertising, marketing and sales to children have been identified as contributing to differences in vaping uptake, along with the influence of peers and family.

What are the concerns about e-cigarettes?

Based on current evidence using e-cigarettes is less harmful and risky than smoking tobacco.

E-cigarettes and vapes are not products for children and young people or non-smokers, they are useful only as a potential route towards stopping smoking. There is strong evidence that e-cigarettes may create a new route into smoking for young people.

Research from the World Health Organisation suggests that children and adolescents who use e-cigarettes are at up to three times greater risk of taking up smoking.

Health concerns

We don't know much about the long-term health effects of vaping, however there is growing evidence to indicate that these are health-harming products. Recent studies suggest that e-cigarettes can negatively impact heart health, including heart rate and blood pressure. They may also impact lung health, particularly in those who already have asthma or other respiratory health issues.

Some of the more minor side effects of e-cigarettes have been reported to include dry cough, shortness of breath and headaches. E-cigarette use can also cause other conditions such as gum disease, tooth decay and early tooth loss.

Addiction

Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive. We don't want to recruit young people into nicotine addiction. As young people's brains are still developing, they can quickly become addicted to nicotine. Research suggests that nicotine can have a negative impact on brain development in young people, including increasing risk for future substance use.

Exploitative marketing

E-cigarette marketing is heavily based on social media, concerts and sporting events, all of which could influence young people to use these products. A recent study found that young people who had never smoked or vaped noticed e-cigarette marketing at higher rates than adult smokers.

Popular platforms such as TikTok contain content that portrays vaping positively. This can contribute to glamourising the products and lead to misinformation about vaping among children and young people. There are concerns that the tobacco industry is appealing to young people through social media by paying 'influencers' to promote e-cigarettes.

Most e-cigarettes are produced in China and some of the most well-known brands are owned by tobacco companies.

Safety concerns

There has been a surge in illicit and non-compliant e-cigarettes on the market in the UK, with some products found to contain double the legal amount of nicotine. These products are likely more harmful to young people and could increase the risk of addiction.

There are also reports of physical injuries, including burns from explosions or malfunctions, when the products are not of the expected standard or are tampered with.

Environmental concerns

There are environmental concerns about e-cigarettes, as they generate a significant amount of toxic and single use plastic waste.

Risk taking behaviour

Young people who smoke are more likely to consume alcohol. Research suggests this is also true for e-cigarettes, in part due to social media trends, and the marketing of flavours with similar names and flavours to alcoholic beverages.

E-cigarettes may renormalise or maintain smoking behaviours due to the hand to mouth action and inhalation.

Money worries

Disposable vapes appear to be relatively cheap with prices starting at pocket money prices of around £3, however the cost of vaping can quickly add up. For young people and families on limited budgets this could be taking money away from other essentials such as food, clothing and leisure.

Mental health

Young people with mental health problems, including eating disorders and mood disorders, are more likely to use e-cigarettes and use them more often.

Do e-cigarettes help people to quit smoking?

There is still a lack of high-quality data about how useful e-cigarettes are for helping people to stop smoking – data on e-cigarettes increasing the risk that young people will take up smoking is stronger.

The best way to stop smoking is with support, Scotland's stop smoking services are free and can offer expert advice and help to support people to quit smoking: www.quityourway.scot

E-cigarettes are not available on prescription and there are other more effective prescription options. Any quit smoking aid is more effective with support.

Using e-cigarettes without stopping smoking does not provide any health benefits.

The legal situation

Vapes are an age-restricted product. In Scotland it's illegal:

- ⊘ To sell vapes to under 18's
- ⊘ To buy vapes on behalf of under 18's

There are no legal restrictions on vaping indoors, however most premises do not allow it.

Underage Supply

Schools and youth organisations are in an ideal position to help reduce young people's access to vapes in school and the community. Vapes in school should be confiscated from under 18s. You can raise concerns about the illegal sale or supply of vapes with your local trading standards team.

