

How to write a nicotine prescription

Smokers who are unable to quit may ask their GP for a nicotine prescription so they can vape legally. Prescribing nicotine liquid for vaping to quit smoking is easy and legal.

1. What is vaping?

Vaping involves heating a liquid (e-liquid), which may or may not contain nicotine, into a vapour which the user inhales. Vaping simulates smoking by providing nicotine if required and mimicking the hand-to-mouth ritual of smoking.

Evidence to date suggests that vaping carries only a fraction of the risk of smoking. According to the UK [Royal College of Physicians](#), the risk of vaping long-term is likely to be no more than 5% of the risk of smoking. It is the products of combustion of tobacco that kill smokers and vaping involves no combustion, tobacco or smoke. Nicotine has only relatively minor adverse health effects in the doses used in vaping.

Nicotine e-liquid consists of nicotine dissolved in propylene glycol (PG) and vegetable glycerine (VG) with added flavouring. Nicotine concentrations typically range from 3-24mg/ml. Most users start with a concentration of 6-18mg/ml although more dependent smokers may need 24mg/ml. Typical use is 2-5ml per day, although some vapers use a lot more.

2. Is prescribing and using nicotine e-liquid legal?

It is legal for doctors to issue nicotine prescriptions for vaping when clinically indicated, for example for adult smokers who have been unable to quit with conventional therapies and want to switch to a less harmful nicotine product. Ideally this involves a face-to-face consultation, taking a history and discussing all the available treatment options, including their potential benefits and harms.

Under the [Personal Importation Scheme](#), it is legal for your patients to import and use nicotine liquid if they possess a nicotine prescription from a registered Australian medical practitioner. The Scheme allows the importation of 3 months' supply at any given time for personal use with a maximum of 15 months' supply imported in any 12 month period.

Repeats can be included at your discretion based on the patient's needs and the frequency of monitoring needed.



3. How to prescribe nicotine e-liquid

Pod models

Devices which use pre-filled pods or cartridges of nicotine e-liquid.

Specify the nicotine concentration and the number of pods required for a 3-month period. For example for a user of one 1ml pod per day of 12mg/ml nicotine...

PRESCRIPTION
Nicotine pods 1ml
12mg/ml. 90
Repeat x3



Refillable devices

These devices have a refillable tank filled by the user.

Ready-to-vape

Ready-to-vape e-liquids are pre-mixed with nicotine, PG, VG and flavourings. For a vaper using 5ml per day of 12mg/ml ready-to-vape e-liquid, then 3 months supply is 450ml and you could write the prescription as:

PRESCRIPTION Nicotine liquid 12mg/ml 450ml Repeat x3

Mix-your-own

Some vapers import concentrated nicotine solution (100mg/ml) which is added to nicotine-free e-liquid purchased locally to make a final concentration suitable for vaping.

For a vaper using 10ml per day of e-liquid with a final concentration of 10mg/ml, the daily dose is 100mg of nicotine (1ml of 100mg/ml concentrated solution). 3 months' supply would be 9,000mg nicotine (90ml of 100mg/ml concentrated solution). A suitable prescription would be:

PRESCRIPTION Nicotine liquid 100mg/ml 90ml Repeat x3

