

# Vaping facts

Tobacco smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and illness in Australia. Many Australian smokers are unable to quit in spite of repeated attempts with conventional treatments. New and effective strategies are needed.

## 1. Vaping is a less harmful alternative to smoking

Vaping is a safer substitute for smokers who are unable to quit smoking or nicotine with the available treatments.

Vaping devices (e-cigarettes) heat a liquid nicotine solution into an aerosol which is inhaled and exhaled as a visible mist (known as 'vaping').

Vaping delivers nicotine and replicates smoking behaviour, with the familiar hand-to-mouth action, 'throat hit' and the physical sensation of 'smoke' going into the lungs.

Vaping by adult non-smokers is rare (less than one in a hundred).

## 2. Vaping is an effective quitting aid

Independent scientific evidence shows that vaping can help people quit smoking and is more effective than nicotine patches and gums. [\[link\]](#)

When used daily, users are 3-8 times more likely to quit than smokers who do not use vaporisers.

## 3. Vaping is supported by science

There is overwhelming scientific agreement that vaping is far less harmful than smoking, but not risk-free. The UK Royal College of Physicians [\[link\]](#) and Public Health England [\[link\]](#) independently concluded that the long-term health risk from vaping is unlikely to exceed 5% of the harm from smoking tobacco.

Vaping products do not produce smoke and it is the toxic chemical and carcinogens in smoke from burning tobacco which cause almost all of the death and disease from smoking.

Some potentially harmful toxins are present in vapour, but at much lower levels than in cigarette smoke.

## 4. Long-term vaping

The long-term health effects of vaping have yet to be established. Based on current knowledge of the ingredients of vapour, the risk is certain to be much less than smoking which kills two in three long-term users or 19,000 Australians each year.

## 5. Secondhand vapour

Unlike secondhand smoke, the risk to bystanders from 'passive vaping' appears to be minimal. Negligible amounts of nicotine and other chemicals are released when the vaper exhales, and this dissipates quickly.



# Vaping facts

## 6. Vaping and young people

Surveys in several countries have consistently found that most vaping by teens is experimental and short-lived. Frequent vaping is very uncommon among teenagers and is almost exclusively confined to current and ex-smokers.

Smoking precedes vaping in most cases and many teens do not use nicotine when they vape. Where vaping is available youth smoking rates are continuing to fall, in some cases such as the US and UK faster than ever.



## 7. Renormalising smoking

There is no evidence that the increased visibility of vaping makes smoking appear more socially acceptable (renormalising smoking). In fact, in countries where vaporisers are freely available, smoking rates are continuing to fall, in some countries faster than ever. On the other hand, in Australia where vaping is restricted, smoking rates have stagnated since 2013. Vaping by adult non-smokers is rare

## 8. How other countries approach vaping

Australia is the only western democracy to ban the use and sale of nicotine for vaping. The UK and New Zealand [\[link\]](#) governments actively promote vaping as a safer alternative.

Nicotine vaporisers are now the most popular quitting aid in many countries, such as the UK, US, EU and Canada, and have helped millions of smokers to quit.

In countries that allow it, increased vaping is associated with increasing population quit rates. In Australia where vaping nicotine is banned and rates of vaping are low, people continue to die from smoking.

## 9. Regulating vaping

ATHRA recommends low-concentrations of nicotine e-liquid be exempted from the Poisons Standard and made available as a consumer product with appropriate regulation, as in most western countries. Vaping products are not therapeutic goods and can be regulated by the HCCC.

Vaping should be regulated to allow access for adult smokers while reducing any potential risks to users and harm to the wider population, especially young people who have never smoked. Regulation should be proportionate to risk.

## 10. The Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

The Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association is a registered health promotion charity established to reduce the harm from tobacco smoking in Australia. ATHRA's aim is to provide smokers and health professionals with evidence-based information on safer alternatives to smoking. ATHRA is funded by donations from the general public and does not receive funding from tobacco or e-cigarette companies.

