

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](#)



5. What is the legal age to purchase vapes?

In the UK it's against the law to sell vapes that contain nicotine to anyone under the age of 18. It is also against the law for someone 18 or older to buy them on behalf of anyone underage, this includes parents and carers.

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 20.5% of 11 - 17 year olds had tried vaping. However, the findings suggest that most youth vaping is experimental, with much lower levels (3.6%) of regular use, which means more than once a week.

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

Single use disposable (throwaway) vapes are the most popular vape for young people aged 11-17 years old. The most popular brand to buy is Elf Bar. These are easy to use, come in a range of colours and different flavours. These are promoted mainly online on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat.

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 strangers 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 (96%) of 11 - 17-year-olds do not regularly vape, this means vape more than once a week, and just under 80% 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 disposable vapes (you may think they are a marker pen), and although it's unlikely they are using a refillable vape device, 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 specific laws and safety standards, including a limit on nicotine content, additives and tank size.

Vape devices that meet the UK laws will have a maximum tank size of 2ml, and the highest nicotine strength will be 20mg/ml or 2%. However, some illegal vapes have much bigger tank sizes and some have been found to contain as much as 50mg of nicotine. If a vape claims to have over 600 puffs, it's also likely to be illegal (against the law). There is no guarantee that illegal vapes are safe and the e-liquid could contain harmful additives that have been banned in the UK.

The only way of confidently buying legal products is to purchase from a trustworthy seller, such as a specialist vape shop, pharmacy, or supermarket. However, as they are an age restricted product, it is unlikely under 18s will be buying vapes from these retailers, which could increase the chance of young people accessing illegal vapes through other sources.

If you suspect a retailer is selling illegal vapes, they should be reported to Dudley Council's Trading Standards Team on **01384 814600** or email trading.standards@dudley.gov.uk . Alternatively complete an [online reporting form](#), which can be submitted anonymously if preferred.



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

Firstly, it's important to know that the majority of illegal vapes seized in Dudley have been disposable vapes. Illegal disposable 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. The main things to check when purchasing disposable vape products are tank size and nicotine strength.

	UK Standard Compliant Maximum Levels
Tank size	2ml
Nicotine strength	20mg/ml or 2%
Number of puffs	600

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 under18s, contact Dudley Council's Trading Standards Team on **01384 814600** or email **trading.standards@dudley.gov.uk** . Alternatively complete an [online reporting form](#), which can be submitted anonymously if preferred.

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.

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