

Using therapeutic vapes to stop smoking

Overview

Therapeutic vapes (vapes) supplied by a pharmacist may help some people stop smoking. They are not a first-choice option for treatment and should be used with counselling to stop smoking (e.g. Quitline).

This card only covers the use of vapes to help someone stop smoking.

Vapes

Vapes may be recommended to help some people stop smoking. 'Vapes' can mean one or more of the following:

- a vaping liquid or substance with or without nicotine
- a vaping accessory to hold the vaping liquid or substance
- a vaping device (which heats the liquid or substance to make an aerosol to inhale).

Unlike the first-choice stop smoking medicines (e.g. nicotine replacement therapies such as patches and gum, or prescription medicines), vapes have not been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). This means the TGA has not assessed vapes for safety, quality, efficacy and performance in the same way that other stop smoking medicines listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods have been assessed. However, the TGA has created strict product standards to reduce certain risks associated with the use of vapes. All vapes supplied by pharmacies comply with the TGA product standards for vapes.

These standards outline specific requirements of vapes relating to:

- permitted ingredients and flavourings
- packaging
- labelling
- device and battery safety.

Vaping can damage your health by exposing you to some harmful chemicals. These chemicals may affect both physical and mental health. As vapes are relatively new, the long-term effects of vapes on a person's health are not yet known.

Using vapes safely

Your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist will provide advice on how to use vapes safely, including how much, how often and for how long, to help you stop smoking. They will also help you make a plan to stop vaping in the future.

Try not to smoke at all if you have started using vapes to help you stop smoking. Research has shown that people who use both vapes and tobacco have a fourfold increased risk of developing lung cancer compared to those who only smoke tobacco.

Important

Vapes should be stored and disposed of carefully. They should be kept out of reach of children, anyone for whom they are not intended, and pets.

Nicotine in vaping liquid can cause poisoning in certain circumstances (e.g., overuse), with children being most at risk.

Call 000 immediately if you suspect:

- a child has swallowed any amount of vaping liquid
- a child has puffed on a vape or spilled vaping liquid on their skin or splashed into their eyes
- an adult has swallowed vaping liquid or used their vape too much and they have symptoms of nicotine poisoning or overdose (e.g. nausea, vomiting, dizziness, breathing difficulties, seizures).

Call the Poisons Information Centre (13 11 26) immediately if you suspect:

- an adult has swallowed vaping liquid but they do not feel ill
- an adult has spilled vaping liquid on their skin or splashed into their eyes.

If there is any uncertainty about possible nicotine poisoning, seek medical advice without delay.

Reducing harms

Additional steps you can take to reduce harms associated with vaping include:

- switching off the vape when you are not using it
- keeping it out of reach, especially from infants and children
- not vaping in smoke-free areas (e.g. indoor public places)
- avoiding vaping in front of people, as exposure to aerosols may increase their risk of harm.

Side effects

Common side effects of vaping can include:

- cough
- dry or irritated mouth and throat
- nausea
- headache
- dizziness.

Tell your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist if you have any side effects from vaping. You can also report side effects to the TGA at www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems.

Strategies to help you stop smoking

- Tell family and friends of your plan to stop smoking and explain how they can help.
- Think of places, times and triggers that might make you want to smoke (e.g. coffee, alcohol, friends who smoke) and make plans for how to manage these.
- Use the 4Ds to help deal with cravings:
 - Delay for at least 5 minutes – the urge will pass.
 - Deep breathe slowly.
 - Drink water to take time out.
 - Do something else to keep your hands busy.
- Try not to vape in situations that you did not smoke in previously.
- Access free counselling from Quitline 13 7848 (13 QUIT).
- Visit www.quit.org.au for information to help you stop smoking.
- Apps such as My QuitBuddy can also be used for support.

Self-care when stopping smoking

- Be kind to yourself and use the above support strategies to help make quitting easier.
- Keeping healthy can help when giving up smoking. Regular exercise, eating well, staying hydrated with water and getting enough sleep supports your mind and body.
- Aim to include a variety of vegetables, fruits, wholegrain/ wholemeal foods, protein-rich foods (e.g. nuts, lean meats, fish, eggs, beans) and low-fat dairy foods each day. Try to omit foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
- Exercise may help with managing cravings, stress and weight. Try to exercise at a moderate level for at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week. Doing some exercise is better than none, and more is better.
- Learn and use relaxation techniques to reduce stress.
- Have less caffeine (e.g. tea, coffee, cola). Without cigarettes, your body may be more sensitive to caffeine.
- If you drink alcohol, try to limit it. The effects of alcohol can reduce your resolve not to smoke.
- Reward yourself with the money you may have saved.

Disposing vapes safely

- Return any containers with vaping liquid (e.g. cartridges, pods) or empty containers that may contain residual nicotine to the pharmacy for disposal through the return of unwanted medicines (RUM) program.
- Contact your local council for advice on the disposal of the vaping device and vaping device batteries. Vapes containing batteries **should never** be put in your recycling or waste bin as they are a fire hazard.

For more information

Therapeutic Goods Administration

Vapes: Information for individuals and patients

Website: www.tga.gov.au/products/unapproved-therapeutic-goods/vaping-hub/vapes-information-individuals-and-patients

Reporting adverse events: (If you have any concerns about an adverse event it is important to also speak to a health professional)

Website: www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems

Quitline

Phone: 13 7848 (13 QUIT)

Quitline counsellors can support you if you are using vapes to stop smoking, or even to stop vaping.

National Cessation Platform

Website: www.quit.org.au

My QuitBuddy app

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthdirect.org.au

Medicines Line

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: 1300medicine.com.au

Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia

Related Fact Cards

- » *Smoking*
- » *Nicotine Replacement Therapy*
- » *Staying a Non-smoker*

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