



Secondary | October 2025

What parents need to know about vaping

Vaping has become increasingly common among teenagers, and many parents are understandably concerned. E-cigarettes were originally designed to help adults quit smoking but they are not safe for children or young people.

The rise in brightly packaged, sweet-flavoured disposable vapes has made them particularly appealing to young people, despite the health risks.

Research shows that more teenagers are experimenting with vapes each year, often without realising how addictive and harmful they can be.

Why vapes are dangerous for children

Although often marketed as 'safer than smoking', vapes still carry serious risks:

- **nicotine addiction** – many vapes contain high levels of nicotine, which can cause dependency and affect brain development in young people
- **harmful chemicals** – new research shows vapes can contain toxic substances such as formaldehyde, acrolein and metals like lead. These can damage the lungs and cardiovascular system
- **respiratory effects** – vaping can irritate airways, trigger asthma and cause long-term lung problems
- **unregulated products** – some disposable vapes, especially those bought online or from informal sellers, may exceed legal nicotine limits or contain banned substances. More recently, tests have even found some vapes laced with illegal drugs such as Spice, making them extremely dangerous.

Why young people are drawn to vapes

- Bright packaging and sweet flavours – flavours such as bubblegum, mango and cotton candy make vapes seem harmless and child-friendly, masking the fact that they often contain addictive nicotine.
- Peer pressure and social media trends – vaping is frequently shown on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram, making it appear fun, fashionable, or a way to fit in with friends.
- Belief that 'everyone is doing it' – many young people think vaping is common and safe, not realising the health risks or that many of their peers actually choose not to vape.



The law on vaping

- It is illegal to sell vapes or e-cigarettes to anyone under 18.
- It is also illegal for adults to buy vapes on behalf of under-18s.
- Schools treat vaping on site in the same way as smoking – it is strictly prohibited.