



HEALTH MATTERS

VAPING

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Vaping: What You Need to Know

Through the media, most of you will be aware of the sharp rise in the use of vaping products by young people in recent years, especially disposable devices. This poses a major risk to students' mental and physical health as well as presenting an added environmental concern.

Due to vaping being relatively new, it is understandable that many young people and their families are not fully aware of the consequences. Whilst there may be reduced health risks compared to smoking that make it an option for those trying to quit smoking, vaping comes with its own risks including addiction, withdrawal symptoms and other health implications from using nicotine.

The Dangers of Disposable Vapes

Most e-cigarettes (vapes) contain nicotine - the addictive drug in regular cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products. Some vape liquids marketed as containing 0% nicotine have even been found to contain nicotine. It has been noted in multiple surveys that, in some areas of Britain, as many as one in five 15 year olds have tried or regularly use disposable vapes specifically – with few to none reporting that they vape with reusable devices and bottled e-liquid. This creates not only a health concern but an environmental issue, with the use of plastics and single-use lithium-ion batteries, which are unlikely to be recycled properly.



Due to the high demand, several illegal and untested models of disposable vape have hit UK shelves. These products are often imported from other countries and are not legal under the Tobacco Products Directive or the UK's Tobacco and Related Products Regulations, rules that enforce safety standards for all vaping products before they can be sold. As a result, these illegal vapes are not being tested against UK standards, so consumers cannot know what is inside them.

We have included a further document about the dangers of vaping that offers further information around this issue.

Why Young People are Vaping

In surveys, the main reasons for vaping were to “give it a try” (65.4%, ASH-Y 2022), and “liking the flavours” (37.2%, ITC Youth 2021). In a recent Action on Smoking and Health Smokefree GB Youth Survey 2023 of 11 to 17 year olds, 2 out of 5 young people said they smoke vapes “just to give it a try” and about 1 in 5 because “other people use them so I join in”.

It is likely that young people will be offered the use of a vape by a friend or that they will see people who they view as popular doing it and want to emulate them. The devices can look similar to a pen, are brightly coloured and have attractive flavor names similar to sweets or energy drinks. Certain brands may become the favourite amongst groups and hence become a status symbol.

69.5% of young people who had vaped, were given their first one by a friend (ASH-Y 2022)

Addiction

33.5% of 11 to 18 year olds in the 2022 ASH-Y survey who currently vaped reported strong, very strong or extremely strong urges to vape

The brain keeps developing until about age 25. Using nicotine in adolescence can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse control. Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical. Withdrawal symptoms can begin within a few hours of last vaping or smoking and can include (NIDA 2021):

- irritability,
- craving,
- depression,
- anxiety,
- cognitive and attention deficits,
- sleep disturbances
- and increased appetite.

It is especially concerning for students' mental health and their ability to learn that they could be experiencing these while trying to focus in class.

Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.



Misleading Packaging

Nicotine salt e-liquid is deceptive: All disposables on the market contain a special kind of e-liquid called nic salts. When manufactured, the nicotine used is combined with a chemical to neutralise its naturally harsh taste and throat hit. It allows for even the highest strengths permitted by law (20mg of nicotine – the most common strength for disposable vapes) to be vaped easily, even by someone young who otherwise would find such a strength unpleasant. When combined with the sweet and fruity flavours available, youngsters could be inhaling a substance that is as sweet and smooth as a confectionery, without understanding the dangers of consuming a highly addictive substance. Of 11-19 year olds surveyed, 52% said they felt addicted to vaping, with severity ranging from “a little” to “very” addicted (ITC Youth 2021).

2% is not a low nicotine strength: Most disposable vapes describe their nicotine content as 2% on their box, young people may attempt to excuse being caught with one by arguing it is only 2% - seemingly low. In reality, this 2% is 20mg – the maximum amount permitted by UK law. The smooth nic salt e-liquid masks this strength, which only contributes to the misconception.

A 2% disposable vape that delivers 500-600 puffs is delivering the same amount of nicotine as around 50 cigarettes

Underage Sale is a Big Problem UK-wide

With the exception of a few who report regularly being given devices by friends or older teens, many children are buying these devices for themselves. The 2022 ASH-Y study revealed data regarding where children have been accessing disposable vaping products. Of those who had vaped in the last 30 days, the majority report that they bought a device themselves:

- 46.5% said they bought them from shops
- 10% said they bought them online
- 6.5% said they bought them at a street market
- 17.8% said they bought it from someone else.

Our Academy Response to the Increase in Vaping

Schools and Academies across the country are reporting that vaping is becoming a growing concern. Indeed in May 2023 Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak stated "I am deeply concerned about the sharp rise in kids vaping and shocked by reports of illicit vapes containing lead getting into the hands of school children...The marketing and the illegal sales of vapes to children is completely unacceptable and I will do everything in my power to end this practice for good"

In response to the increasing number of young people who are choosing to vape nationally, Magna Academy, in line with schools and academies across the country, are having to update our Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum and Behaviour Policy in order to further safeguard and support all students within the academy. We have sought to base our response around evidence and guidance produced by ASH (Action on smoking and Health), the DfE and the response of other local and Trust Academies.

This coordinated whole academy approach to smoking and vaping will include updating our personal development curriculum to include vaping as part of students' learning about issues relating to tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse.

To ensure that we continue to keep our community safe, we have also updated our academy behaviour policy to include specific reference to vaping.

The behaviour policy now states:

"It is against the law for any person to smoke or vape on the academy site, this includes staff, students, parents/carers and visitors.

The academy takes smoking and vaping very seriously, whether it be on the academy premises, or outside the academy premises while wearing the academy uniform. If a student is caught smoking or vaping, or where given the balance of probabilities a student has been smoking or vaping, parents/carers will receive a letter and the following sanctions will be set:

When the student receives a sanction for smoking or vaping, they will be searched and any paraphernalia confiscated.

- **1st occasion - 2 hour SLT detention**
- **2nd occasion - 1 day Academy Based Exclusion (ABE)**
- **3rd and any subsequent occasion - 1 day suspension**

Parents/carers will be contacted to collect items. Searching will be ongoing at random intervals to ensure no further items are brought into the academy."

We wish to thank you for your continued support and understanding in this matter.

References

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Additional information from LiQuid