

E-cigarette **fact sheet** for **parents** and **teachers**



E-cigarettes pose serious health risks to teens.

In 2019, 18.6% of Australian teens and young adults aged 15-24, who are current tobacco smokers, used e-cigarettes, **an increase from 6.6% in 2016**. A Royal Children's Hospital 'Child Health Poll' found 57% of parents have never discussed e-cigarettes with their teen. Social media is being used extensively by tobacco and e-cigarette companies to **market e-cigarettes to teens and young adults**.

About e-cigarettes

E-cigarettes, also known as '**vapes**', are **battery operated devices** that work by heating a liquid (or 'juice') until it becomes an aerosol that users inhale.

Some people mistakenly believe the '**cloud**' from vaping is a vapour, like steam. It is really **an aerosol**, a fine spray of **chemicals** that enter the body via the lungs and small particles that can **lodge in the lungs**. Using an e-cigarette is commonly called '**vaping**'.



Fast facts

1 | Legality of e-cigarettes

- Buying and selling an e-cigarette device or any liquid that contains nicotine without a doctor's prescription is **illegal** in Australia
- In Tasmania, it is illegal to sell an e-cigarette device or a liquid intended to be used in an e-cigarette device (even if it does not contain nicotine) to a **person under 18 years**

2 | Safety

- Most e-cigarettes and e-liquids that are labelled nicotine-free and available for sale in Australia **do, in fact, contain nicotine**
- There are **no quality or safety standards** for e-cigarette devices nor nicotine-free liquids, meaning their manufacture, contents and labelling are unregulated
- E-cigarette devices can **explode** or catch fire



3 | Detecting e-cigarette use

- E-cigarettes come in all shapes and sizes, and can look like a **pen, highlighter or USB**. Some can be **disposable** and some are small enough to fit into a pocket or a pencil case. An e-cigarette device can be identified by taking the 'cap' off a suspected item to see if it has a mouthpiece
- Not all e-cigarettes emit visible aerosol. The easiest way to detect e-cigarette use is if there is an **unexplained scent in the air** from e-cigarette flavouring. Teens tend to use fruit or confectionery flavours, so this scent is usually quite sweet



4 | Harms of e-cigarettes

- Nicotine **harms adolescent brain development**, impacting memory and concentration
- Teens are particularly susceptible to **nicotine addiction**, and those who use e-cigarettes are more likely to take up smoking cigarettes
- The short-term side effects of e-cigarette use can include vomiting and nausea
- The long term effects are not yet known, but it is clear that the inhalation of chemicals **damage the lung and heart**
- Even e-cigarettes without nicotine cause harm

