



COUNSELLOR'S CORNER AUGUST 2022

VAPING

High school is the place where most teens want to make new friends and fit in with those around them. They will do anything to get involved in a friend group by portraying a specific image. They will do a variety of things to be liked and vaping seems to be one of the biggest sources of peer pressure for teens today – they may even vape just to take a nice picture. #doitfortheagram

Friends can be the strongest influence when it comes to risky behaviour, such as vaping.

The Australian Alcohol and Drug Foundation has reported that around 14% of 12 to 17-year-olds have ever tried Vaping.

How does vaping work?

Vape pens heat a liquid until it becomes a vapor, which is then inhaled. The liquid, or vape juice, can contain nicotine or marijuana distillate or oil. Vapes can be refillable or pre-filled with cartridges containing the vape juice. Those that are pre-filled, called Puff Bars, are designed for one-time use. After taking a certain number of puffs, the user throws the device away.

Vapes can come in many shapes and sizes and can be made to look like everyday items including highlighters, pens or USB memory sticks. In a school environment or at home, they can be hard to detect and identify.

What are the risks?

In Australia, it is illegal for anyone to possess a nicotine-filled vape unless they are over 18 and have a prescription to help them stop smoking.

The biggest misunderstanding about vapes is that they are harmless compared to cigarettes. Many vapes that are labelled as nicotine-free, contain nicotine.

A review conducted by the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, found vaping increases the risk of multiple adverse health outcomes, including poisoning, addiction, seizures, burns, lung injury and smoking uptake.

Alarmingly, the nicotine content in one vape can equal 50 cigarettes!! – making them highly addictive. Like with any addiction, nicotine affects the physical and mental health of smokers. Dependence on nicotine has been associated with impulsivity, mood disorders, anxiety, suicidality and depression. Nicotine increases sensitivity to stress and alters the coping mechanism in the brain.

How do I know if my child is vaping?

Start by asking your child in a nonjudgmental, concerned way if they have tried vaping. You want to encourage conversation, not shut it down. Even if you don't think your kids vape, talk about it with them anyway so they know it's unhealthy. Find conversation openers when you drive past a vape shop or see someone vaping. Start with non-confrontational, open-ended questions like, "what do you think about vaping?"

Support your child to make positive choices for themselves and their lifestyle and encourage them to walk away or stand up for themselves when faced with peer pressure. Being prepared with a social script can help:

- "Nah – nicotine gives me a headache"
- "I'm trying out for the soccer team, and I don't want vaping to ruin my chances"
- Maybe make a joke, or say "no thanks" plainly and firmly.

Signs of vaping include:

- New health issues such as coughing or wheezing
- A change in behaviour or attitude - irritable, sneaking around or being more secretive than usual
- New smells – Flavourings are used in nicotine and marijuana vapes, so parents might notice fruity or sweet scents on their child or in their rooms.

If your child has already started vaping, education and encouragement may help curb the habit. Help them find the motivation to stop vaping. You might want to talk about:

- Understanding why and trying to get to the root of the problem with questions like, "how does vaping make you feel?"
- Wanting to be the best, healthiest version of themselves
- Not wanting to be addicted
- Avoiding health effects including impotence and decreased sports performance
- Not wanting to increase anxiety or depression
- Saving money
- Going against advertising that targets young people
- Talk about expectations: Make it clear why you don't think your child should vape, including the associated health risks.
- Set the example: If you're currently vaping or smoking, set the example and quit today. Be honest with your struggles to help your child see the consequences of your actions.

You can talk to your GP or local youth health service for advice and support. Or you can call the Quitline on 13 7848. Their friendly Counsellors understand nicotine addiction and can provide advice, tips, and support to help you quit. For more information, please visit:

[Do you know what you're vaping? | Cancer Institute NSW](#)

It is important to note that School counselling is not a crisis service but should you feel your daughter may benefit from school counselling, please speak with your daughter's house coordinator or email me on counsellors@merici.act.edu.au.

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