

Vaping products – information for stop smoking services

The use of vaping products is growing rapidly in New Zealand, as it is in other countries. Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to report that they are currently using or have tried vaping products.

How many New Zealanders are vaping?

One in six people (17%) had tried vaping in 2016. Males (20%) were more likely to report that they had ever vaped when compared to females (14%).

Long-term health risks

The long-term health risks associated with vaping products are still unknown but evidence suggests that they are much lower than the risks associated with tobacco smoking. As such it is expected that health risks will reduce significantly for smokers who switch to vaping.

It is now legal to sell vaping products

Vaping products and heated tobacco products can be legally sold in New Zealand. This is because a recent District Court decision ruled these products can be lawfully sold under the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990.

All the requirements of the Act also apply to vaping and heated tobacco products, including banning advertising of these products and making it illegal to sell them to young people under the age of 18.

The smoking ban in indoor workplaces only applies to smoking and does not apply to vaping or the use of other products that are not smoked. Individual employers and business owners can decide whether they want to include vaping in their smokefree policies.

The Government is considering how best to apply risk-proportionate regulations across all tobacco products, including smoked tobacco, heated tobacco products and vaping products.

Stop smoking services must support people using vaping products

Stop smoking services:

- Should become 'vaping friendly' (i.e. be open to clients who choose to use a vaping product in their quit attempt)
- Should provide accurate information to people about vaping, so that clients can make an informed choice about the benefits and risks of vaping
- Should support people who choose to use a vaping product to stop smoking. This may include providing advice on where people can obtain a vaping product and get further advice on how to use and maintain the product.

Vaping liquid ingredients and safety

There are health risks linked to the chemicals found in vaping products. Aside from nicotine, the main ingredients in vaping liquids are vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol, which are considered safe for use in many consumer products (eg, inhaled medicines, foods, cosmetics and sweeteners). The inhalation risk of flavours is generally unknown. The long-term safety of inhaling these substances is unknown and continues to be assessed.

The nicotine in vaping liquid poses relatively little danger to people; however, in excessive amounts, it can be lethal, especially for children. Vaping liquid should be kept out of reach of children to prevent accidental poisoning.

Vapour

Nicotine is delivered to the user in the vapour. However, the amount of nicotine that vaping products deliver to the user depends on a number of different factors including the concentration of nicotine in the vaping liquid, the heating of the liquid, the other constituents of the liquid, and the technique of the user.

Some toxins have been found in vapour. However, when vaping products are used within normal operating levels (i.e. not overheated), these toxins are generally present at very low levels – many times lower than in tobacco smoke.

The risks from second-hand vapour are not fully known at this stage, however second-hand vapour is known to be less harmful than second-hand smoke.

As a precaution, the Ministry of Health recommends that users be cautious around non-users, babies and young people.

Concurrent use of vaping products and stop smoking medicines

Some people may choose to use vaping products as well as stop smoking medicines at the same time. There are no known harms of this practice.

Evidence is limited on the effectiveness of vaping products compared with Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT). Results from the one trial conducted showed that vaping products were equally as good as nicotine patches in helping people stop smoking. New research is expected to be published later this year.

Vaping products are electrical products and should be treated as such

Some reports indicate malfunctioning vaping products have caused harm (eg, injuries when vaping products have exploded). In many cases, the problem has been a malfunctioning or overheated battery. People should treat vaping products like other electrical products (eg, mobile phones) and follow the instructions for care and charging.

More information about vaping products

The [Ministry of Health website](#) keeps up-to-date information on the regulation of vaping products. Other useful sources are:

- [Cabinet paper on the proposed controls](#)
- [Cancer Research UK's policy on vaping products](#)
- [Public Health England documents on vaping products.](#)

Specialist vape shops in your region may also have information about the products they sell.