



Electronic Cigarettes/Vapes and young people



The most recent Young People's Survey in Guernsey (2019) found that 28% of boys and 21% of girls said that they have at least tried electronic cigarettes and 3% of boys and 1% of girls responded that they use electronic cigarettes 'regularly' (once a week or more). However, young people's services and educational settings are reporting an increase in students vaping, and it is expected that the prevalence of vaping in young people has increased since 2019.

There can be several misconceptions of the health risks of using electronic cigarettes and therefore this information aims to equip parents/carers and professionals working with young people of up-to-date health information and key messages to communicate to young people around the use of electronic cigarettes/vapes.

What are electronic cigarettes?

- There are different types of electronic cigarette. The first generation looked like normal cigarettes, but now they come in different sizes and shapes.
- Electronic cigarettes work by super heating liquid nicotine and turning it into vapour (a bit like steam). When this vapour is inhaled it is absorbed by the mouth and lungs to enter the blood stream. When the nicotine hits the brain, it produces effects similar to smoking.

What are the facts about electronic cigarettes?

- Electronic cigarettes are thought to be far less harmful for health than smoking, as the user doesn't get as many toxins as from regular tobacco. However, Electronic cigarettes have not been around long enough to know the long-term impact on health.
- Using an electronic cigarette generally means that someone will remain addicted to nicotine (unless they always use a zero-nicotine e-cig).
- Nicotine can have negative impacts on teens and young adults. Nicotine changes adolescents' brain cell activity in the parts of the brain responsible for attention, learning and memory. It can also worsen anxiety.
- A number of the electronic cigarette companies are owned by tobacco companies.



- There is a risk that young people will use them and become addicted to nicotine or move on to tobacco smoking.
- If guidelines are not followed, they represent a fire hazard when charging or using the batteries.
- If an electronic cigarette is modified or altered, it can be highly dangerous. Modifying electronic cigarettes is an increasingly popular pursuit.

It can be difficult to identify, just by looking, if an electronic cigarette has been modified to burn cannabis or another illegal drug. Electronic cigarettes are not currently regulated in Guernsey which means that there is no restriction on the content of products sold in Guernsey, increasing risk.

Key messages to young people about using electronic cigarettes/vapes:

- Using electronic cigarettes is safer than smoking tobacco, however, people would only be advised to use e-cigarettes as an aid to quitting smoking and preferably after they have already tried licensed nicotine replacement products, such as patches or gum.
- The long-term health impacts of using electronic cigarettes are unknown and therefore they are not appropriate for any child to use.
- Most electronic cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and affects two different chemicals in the brain. If young people want to stop using e-cigarettes that contain nicotine, they might find this difficult as they will be addicted to the effects of the nicotine. Nicotine also changes adolescent brain cell activity in the parts of the brain responsible for attention, learning and memory and can also worsen anxiety.
- It is illegal for retailers to sell any nicotine products to under 18's.

What to do if you're concerned:

- If you have concerns that your child is vaping, then we would encourage having open conversations with them about the facts of using electronic cigarettes.
- You can contact Quitline Guernsey or Action for Children for advice on talking to your child about using electronic cigarettes and the risks involved.

Contact details:

Action for Children – 01481 700218 / <https://www.facebook.com/AFCguernsey>

Quitline Guernsey – 01481 220021

The Health Improvement Commission – grace.lindsay@healthimprovement.gg / 01481 210423

