

Let's Talk About Vaping

Vaping, the act of inhaling and exhaling vapor produced by electronic cigarettes or similar devices, has gained significant popularity in recent years. While marketed as a potential harm-reduction alternative to traditional smoking, concerns have been raised regarding its impact on the health of employees.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH VAPING?

Vaping involves the use of electronic devices, often referred to as e-cigarettes or vapes, that heat a liquid (commonly known as e-liquid or vape juice) to produce an aerosol that is then inhaled and exhaled. This aerosol typically contains nicotine, flavourings, and other chemicals.

Vaping devices vary in size, shape, and functionality. They typically consist of a battery, a heating element (atomizer), a reservoir for e-liquid, and a mouthpiece. Some devices are disposable, while others are rechargeable and reusable.

More recently, vaping use has been on the rise, especially with younger Australians. Figures given by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) show that e-cigarette use by Australians aged 14 or older more than doubled from 2016 to 2019. Another study by the University of Sydney found that vaping was common for young non-smokers aged 14-17, with 32% surveyed having vaped at least once.

The allure of vaping, especially for younger people, can be attributed to various factors. The novelty aspect of these devices, combined with the influence of family members or friends who vape, contributes to its appeal. There's a prevalent misconception that vaping is relatively harmless, especially when compared to traditional cigarettes, further fuelling its popularity among younger employees. Viral online trends around vaping have heightened this visibility and desirability amongst many young people.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE VAPING?

There's a misconception that vaping is just water vapour, but all vape products are made up of toxic particles. While vapes may have fewer chemicals than traditional cigarettes, they can still contain and emit many toxic compounds.

Unfortunately, many vape products are sold with the idea that they can replace cigarettes or be an aid for smoking cessation, which may be the case, but the more serious unintended consequence is vaping has now become a recreational activity for those who have never smoked before.

Vape products are readily available online and in shops, but there is currently limited regulation of 'over the counter' vaping products, including disposable vapes. This has raised some questions about the amount of dangerous chemicals vapes and e-cigarettes may contain.

A recent decision by the Australian government to ban all non-prescription vape products over the next few years – including those that do not contain nicotine – is expected to help tackle high rates of vaping, but concern remains for those already addicted to vaping.



Do you need help? Visit 'Quit' (<https://www.quit.org.au>) - it's a Government funded program that provides confidential counselling services as well as lots of great tools for individuals and workplaces.

FIND OUT MORE

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Here's what you need to know:

- 1. Vaping is addictive:** Some vapes contain nicotine, the main chemical found in tobacco. Regular vaping can lead to nicotine dependence, making it challenging for individuals to quit or reduce their vaping habits. Some vape products containing nicotine are sometimes labelled 'nicotine-free' ([click to learn more - https://lungfoundation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Factsheet-Vaping-and-Young-People_For-Educators-Jul2021.pdf](https://lungfoundation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Factsheet-Vaping-and-Young-People_For-Educators-Jul2021.pdf))
- 2. It could become a health problem:** The inhalation of vaporised chemicals can irritate the respiratory system, potentially leading to coughing, wheezing, and other respiratory symptoms. Prolonged exposure to vaping aerosols may increase the risk of developing respiratory conditions. Nicotine present in vaping products can also elevate heart rate, increase blood pressure, and constrict blood vessels, potentially contributing to cardiovascular issues such as an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- 3. Vapes contain risky chemicals:** Some vapes have harmful chemicals, such as formaldehyde, which can cause lung damage, and propylene glycol, which damages cells. While the long-term effects of these chemicals are still being studied, their presence raises concerns about potential health risks.
- 4. Vaping is hard to give-up:** Even if a vape is nicotine-free, other potentially addictive chemicals (such as Vitamin E acetate) can make it hard to quit vaping. This could pose other challenges, such as being distracted by the need to vape.

At this stage, it's unknown what effects vaping has on our long-term health, but there is evidence to suggest vaping can create short-term physical symptoms like nausea, vomiting, airway irritation, chest pain and palpitations.

VAPING & THE WORKPLACE

Vaping has become as undesirable in the office as tobacco, but the popularity of vaping still poses some problems for most workplaces and staff.

It is important for managers and staff to recognise and address the potential health risks it poses. By raising awareness, implementing clear workplace policies, providing smoking cessation support, and fostering a positive work culture, employers can support their employees in making informed decisions and cultivating healthier habits.

Awareness and education: Promoting awareness and education about the potential health risks of vaping is crucial. Employers should provide resources, share evidence-based information, and raise awareness among employees about the risks associated with vaping.

Clear workplace policies: Establishing clear policies that address vaping in the workplace can help maintain a healthy and productive work environment. These policies should define where vaping is permitted or prohibited, address the use of vaping devices in shared spaces, and outline the consequences for policy violations.

Supporting smoking cessation programs: Employers can implement smoking cessation programs and support services to assist employees who wish to quit vaping or smoking. Providing access to counselling services, nicotine replacement therapies, and support groups can aid employees in their journey towards healthier choices.

Employee wellness initiatives: Encouraging overall employee well-being by offering wellness programs and initiatives can promote healthier lifestyle choices. This can include physical fitness activities, stress management resources, and mental health support, which can indirectly contribute to reducing vaping habits among employees.

Support and communication: Fostering open communication channels and creating a supportive work culture allows employees to discuss their vaping habits, seek assistance if needed, and feel supported in their efforts to make healthier choices.

If you're looking for ways to break the vaping habit, there is EAP support available at **1300 687 327** or through the **Converge app**.

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