



# VAPING

## Nicotine dependence

Vapes (e-cigarettes) can contain over 240 chemicals, including the addictive substance nicotine (also found in cigarettes).

### Nicotine and the brain

The brain keeps developing until around the age of 25. Regular nicotine use can affect learning, concentration, mood, and memory. It can also increase feelings of stress and worsen depression and anxiety. Exposing young brains to nicotine can rewire their brains to be more dependent on nicotine and other (addictive) drugs into adulthood.

### Vaping is linked to a range of health harms, including:



Breathlessness



Nicotine dependence



Nicotine poisoning



Throat irritation



Cough



Dizziness



Headaches



Nausea



Serious burns



Increased chance of starting tobacco smoking

### Understanding nicotine dependence

Nicotine dependence can develop quickly. The more a young person vapes (or smokes), the more their brain and body get used to nicotine, which is what makes them keep vaping and smoking.

When someone becomes addicted to nicotine, their brain and body start to need nicotine to feel satisfied and work normally.

#### Signs of nicotine dependence:

- Vaping soon after waking up in the morning (within 30 minutes).
- Always taking a vape when leaving the house.
- Vaping more when highly stressed.
- Wanting to buy a new vape quickly after losing or finishing current one.
- Having poor concentration or being in a bad mood when they can't vape.
- Keep vaping even though they have been in trouble for vaping at school, home, or work.

# Understanding nicotine withdrawal

When someone first stops vaping, they can experience temporary nicotine withdrawal symptoms which aren't dangerous. Withdrawal symptoms can happen in the first few hours because the nicotine level in their bloodstream drops.

This can cause unpleasant physical symptoms, increased anxiety, and strong urges to vape (known as cravings). After someone quits, the physical withdrawal symptoms usually get better after the first 1 to 2 weeks.

The psychological craving to vape can last longer though as the brain adapts and re-learns how to function without nicotine.

## Nicotine withdrawal symptoms:



Being **down** or irritable.



Being **unable** to concentrate or think clearly.



Feeling **anxious**, restless or jittery.



Not being able to **sleep** well.



Feeling **more** hungry than usual.



Not being able to **focus** on things apart from vaping.

## Conversation tips when chatting with a young person about vaping

- Try to start the conversation in a relaxed easy-going way. Take cues around you, e.g. a note from school, a news story about vaping, or seeing people vaping. Have your facts ready.
- Ask what they need, if they want your help and how you can best support them.
- Understand how much they know about vaping harms and risks.
- Help them think about the impact vapes have on their health and wellbeing, e.g. focus at school, sporting ability, academic performance, and social interactions.
- To understand why they vape, and start finding possible solutions, consider asking questions like: 'What made you want to try?', 'How did it make you feel when you first tried vaping?', 'How do you feel about it now?'

## Where to get help

To support a young person who vapes and/or may be addicted to nicotine see your local doctor, youth health service or other health services. You can also call [Quitline](https://www.quitline.com.au) on 13 7848 (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday), for confidential tailored advice.



Get the facts about vaping at [healthywa.wa.gov.au/vaping](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/vaping)

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