

Appendix 1. Patient handout on vaping

Vaping is a quitting aid for adult smokers who are unable to quit with other methods. It can be used as a short-term quitting aid or as a long-term alternative to prevent relapse to smoking. Vaping delivers nicotine and replicates the hand-to-mouth action, sensations and social aspects of smoking. Non-smokers and people under 18 years of age should not vape.

Vaping is far safer than smoking, but the long-term risks are unknown. The more common side effects are cough, mouth and throat irritation, but these are usually mild and settle over time. Long-term use may increase risk of serious diseases, such as cancer, compared with being abstinent from tobacco, but this risk is likely to be much lower than from continuing to smoke.

Correct use

Vaping is different to smoking, and it may take some time and practice to get used to it. You may need to try different devices, flavours or nicotine strengths until you find the right combination that works for you.

- Take longer, slow puffs, approximately 3–4 seconds each.
- A little coughing is common at first, but it usually settles.
- Use when there is an urge to smoke or to relieve withdrawal symptoms.
- Have either 10–12 puffs as though smoking a cigarette or just a puff or two as needed.
- Vaping takes a little longer to deliver a nicotine hit than cigarettes.
- Daily use is more effective for quitting than less frequent use.
- Satisfaction increases with practice, so give yourself time to adjust.

Your nicotine prescription

It is illegal to possess nicotine e-liquid without a prescription.

If your prescription is for an Australian pharmacy, it can be used at participating pharmacy shops or online Australian pharmacies.

If ordering nicotine liquid from overseas, send a copy of the prescription to the vendor so it can be returned with your order. If you have ordered a quantity or concentration that is greater than the amount specified on your prescription, the order may be confiscated.

Keep a photo of your nicotine script on your smartphone in case it is required by authorities.

When to stop

Try to stop smoking as soon as you feel you can. Long-term 'dual use' (vaping and smoking) should be avoided as even light smoking is very harmful. Short-term vaping is recommended. Try to stop vaping within 3–6 months if you can. However, long-term vaping is less harmful than going back to smoking.

Nicotine safety

Nicotine liquid is toxic and can cause serious harm if ingested, especially in high concentrations. Always keep nicotine in child-resistant containers out of the reach of children and pets and in a locked cupboard. Contact 13 11 26 in cases of poisoning.

If you spill nicotine liquid on your skin, wash it off promptly with warm, soapy water. It is a good practice to use disposable gloves when handling concentrated nicotine (100 mg/mL). Goggles can help to avoid exposure from splashes to the eyes.

Only buy e-liquid from reputable sellers, never from the black market. As with all medications, your prescribed nicotine should never be shared with anyone else.

Built-in batteries

Devices with built-in batteries are charged via the USB port using the USB cable supplied. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- It is safe to plug the USB cable into a computer, television or game console.
- If using mains power, make sure the wall plug (adaptor) is compatible with your device. Generally, low-output plugs of 0.5–1 amp are required.
- Phone and tablet chargers are generally rated ≥ 2 amps output and are not suitable.
- Do not leave batteries unattended while charging, and unplug when charged.

Removable batteries

If your device uses removable batteries regarding charging:

- Never carry loose batteries in your pocket or purse without a plastic case.
- Removable batteries should always be charged in a good-quality, dedicated battery charger.
- Place the charger on a non-flammable surface in case of overheating, and check from time to time to make sure it is not getting hot.
- Do not keep your batteries on charge for longer than necessary, and never leave batteries unattended when charging.
- Only use reputable battery brands from trusted suppliers. Never buy recycled or reclaimed batteries.
- If the external wrapper is damaged, the battery should be discarded or the wrap replaced.
- Avoid exposing your batteries to extreme temperatures, such as direct sunlight or in a car glove box.