

# Illegal Vapes



Illegal vapes can pose various dangers due to their unregulated nature. Some potential risks include:

- **Contaminated substances:** Illegal vapes may contain harmful chemicals, contaminants, or toxic substances that can be hazardous when inhaled.
- **Lack of quality control:** These products are often made without proper quality standards, leading to potential manufacturing defects or subpar materials.
- **Unknown health effects:** Since illegal vapes haven't undergone rigorous testing, their long-term health effects remain unclear, and they could be more harmful than legal alternatives.
- **Explosion hazards:** Poorly constructed illegal vape devices can lead to battery explosions, causing serious injuries.
- **Underage use:** The black market for vapes can facilitate access for underage individuals, increasing the risk of addiction and health issues.

In a recent BBC article, used vapes gathered at Baxter College in Kidderminster were tested in a laboratory. The results showed children using them could be inhaling more than twice the daily safe amount of lead, and nine times the safe amount of nickel.

High levels of lead exposure in children can affect the central nervous system and brain development, according to the World Health Organization.

## Where to get help?

For more information on how to access support to quit smoking call **Healthy Sandwell** on **0800 011 4656**, Text **GETHEALTHY** to **87007** or email **LS@nhs.net**



## How to spot an illegal vape

### Incorrect health warning!

The health warning must appear on both the front and back surfaces and cover 30% of the area of each of those surfaces.



Should not be more than, 2ml (around 600 puffs)

No name and address of a UK responsible person, only reference to 'Made in China'

This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance

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There is no reference that the product is 'not recommended for use by non-smokers'.

The product is **not registered** with the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) meaning that its safety has not been assessed.

# Big Guide to... Illegal Vapes



The MHRA have a publicly available list of vape products which have been approved for the market.

<https://cms.mhra.gov.uk/ecig>

## BE AWARE

Anyone spotting illegal vapes for sale, or who believes a shop may be selling vaping products to under 18's, should report details to **trading\_standards@sandwell.gov.uk**

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Sir Chris Whitty, has put the case very simply, 'The key points about vaping (e-cigarettes) can be easily summarised.'

**“If you smoke, vaping is much safer; if you don't smoke, don't vape.”**

*Whitty C. Chief Medical Officer for England on vaping. 30 May 2023.*

## Vaping is NOT more harmful than smoking

There are over 70 years of evidence of the harms of smoking while vaping has only been around for 16 years since 2007, so we cannot yet be precise about the long-term risks of vaping. However, the most recent independent review of the evidence commissioned, concluded that vaping poses only a small fraction of the risk of smoking. The review also highlighted that vaping is not risk free and advised against people who have never smoked from taking up vaping.

The levels of exposure to toxic chemicals from vaping are a tiny proportion of those from smoking.

## Vaping is NOT more addictive than smoking

How addictive nicotine is, depends on product design and the mode of use. Cigarettes carry the highest risk of addiction, due to cigarette designs that facilitate efficient and tolerable inhalation of nicotine-laden smoke deep into the lung and from there to the brain, and constituents that reinforce the addictiveness of nicotine.

Vaping products generally provide lower nicotine levels to users than smoking does. Cigarettes generally contain 10 to 15 mg nicotine per rod, which is 200 to 300 mg per pack of 20 cigarettes.

A UK standard disposable vape with the highest legal level of nicotine (20 mg/ml) contains 2 ml of liquid which amounts to 40 mg of nicotine.

Existing evidence suggests that in general the risk and severity of nicotine dependency from vaping is lower than for smoking.

## Vaping is NOT a proven gateway into smoking

If vaping were a gateway into smoking, as vaping increased smoking rates would also be expected to increase. To the contrary between 2010 and 2021 when e-cigarette use grew from a low base in England, smoking rates among children continued to fall, which does not support the gateway hypothesis at population level.

NHS digital data on current smoking rates among 11-15 year olds in England found that it fell from 9% in 2010 to 6% in 2016 and 3% in 2021. Among those aged 16+ smoking rates fell from 20% to 18% between 2010 and 2016, and 12% in 2021.

## Nicotine DOES NOT damage young people's brain development

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is an essential and medically licensed medicine to treat the healthcare needs of populations, because there is good evidence of effectiveness and safety.

NRT is medically licensed for use in adults as well as young people aged 12 upwards, pregnant women and people with cardiovascular disease.

## How can vaping affect someone?

Vaping may cause the following effects: Dry mouth, Dry nose, Dry throat, Dry eyes, Dizziness, Sore throat, Cough, Itchiness, Headaches, Stomach ache, Cramps, Heartburn, Nausea, Sweating, Increased heart rate, Worsen asthma symptoms.

The long-term effects of vaping are still very much unknown, and it could take decades to find out any potential harms.

## Can the vapour affect other people?

Smoking e-cigarettes, also known as vaping, doesn't produce tobacco smoke so the risks of passive smoking with conventional cigarettes don't apply to e-cigs. Research into this area is ongoing, but it seems that e-cigs release negligible amounts of nicotine into the atmosphere and the limited evidence available suggests that any risk from passive vaping to bystanders is small relative to tobacco cigarettes.

## Are VAPES safe?

National research states that vapes are safer than traditional tobacco smoking. National government recognise the effectiveness of vapes as a smoking quit aid and continue to support local areas to ensure access to vapes for local smokers to quit. Vapes should only ever be used by adults (over 18's) who are quitting tobacco. Vapes should not be used by U18's or by adults who have never smoked.

## What is nicotine poisoning?

Nicotine poisoning is essentially having too much nicotine in the body. Nicotine poisoning often occurs through ingesting nicotine products but can occur through inhalation and absorption through the skin and eyes.

Symptoms can include; nausea, vomiting, stomach ache, loss of appetite, headache, dizziness, anxiety, confusion, rapid breathing, increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure.

In extreme cases nicotine poisoning can be fatal.

