

Let's talk about Vaping...

Student Factsheet

What are vapes?



A vape, also known as an e-cigarette is a device which vaporises and delivers a chemical mixture known as an "e-liquid" to the lungs in the form of an aerosol.

How popular are vapes with young people?



Between 2015 and 2019, the number of 15 to 16-year-olds who had used an vape at least once had risen from 23% to 37.2%. The number of young people who regularly vape has also increased in this time from 10.1% to 18.1%[\[i\]](#).

However, these figures are from 2019, and as disposable vapes have gotten more popular in the last few years, it is likely that more young people are vaping now.

What's the difference between a disposable vape and a reusable vape?



A disposable vape is a small device that is already pre-filled with E-liquid. They can't be recharged or refilled, and once the liquid runs out, you discard the vape altogether.

Unlike a disposable vape, a reusable vape requires more work. They have a rechargeable battery and refillable pods/tanks. They can be reused multiple times, and they are not thrown away once the liquid has run out.

Are vapes harmful to your body?



Although vapes, both disposable and reusable, are safer than smoking normal cigarettes, they are not harm-free, and we do not know the long-term health impact. Vaping can cause poisonings, burns, blast injuries, lung injury and asthmatic attacks[\[ii\]](#). More evidence shows that using vapes can damage your brain, heart, teeth and gums, blood vessels and lungs[\[iii\]](#).

Irish research shows that teenagers who use vapes are three to five times more likely to start smoking compared to those who never used vapes[\[iv\]](#). Both vapes and normal cigarettes contain an ingredient called nicotine, which is very addictive. Nicotine can harm young people's brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s[\[v\]](#).

Vapes hurt children and teenagers, and the best course of action is to never start. They are very addictive and can lead to smoking, which is really damaging to your health.

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Are vapes harmful to the environment?

Vapes have a serious impact on the environment as they contain plastic, nicotine salts, heavy metals, lead, mercury, and flammable lithium-ion batteries. They can be damaging to the environment if thrown away. They pollute our waterways, and hurt wildlife^[vi] and people.

Shockingly, in the UK, five million disposable vapes are thrown away each week^[vii]. Here in Ireland, an estimated 12.5 million disposable vapes were sold in 2022, ^[viii] and, likely, these single-use devices were simply binned, adding to our growing plastic waste problem.

To protect young people's and the planet's health, the Irish Heart Foundation has called for the government to introduce a full ban on all forms of disposable vapes.

How are vaping companies targeting young people?

Vape companies target young people in lots of ways, including:

- Online advertisements.
- Influencers on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram.
- Bright, colourful stands in shops and newsagents, known as Point-of-sale (POS).

The big tobacco companies often own the biggest and most popular vape brands available. The same clever marketing tactics that have made cigarettes so popular since the 1950s are now being used to promote vapes among young people. They are using the same playbook.

References

[i] Sunday S, Hanafin J, Clancy L. Increased smoking and e-cigarette use among Irish teenagers: A new threat to Tobacco Free Ireland 2025. ERJ Open Res 2021; in press (<https://doi.org/10.1183/23120541.00438-2021>).

[ii] Health Research Board. 2020. Electronic cigarette use and tobacco cigarette smoking initiation in adolescents: An evidence review

<https://www.hrb.ie/news/press-releases/single-press-release/article/new-health-research-board-evidence-shows-e-cigarettes-are-associated-with-adolescents-starting-to-sm/>

[iii] European Society of Cardiologists. 2019. Cardiologists establish how e-cigarettes damage the brain, blood vessels and lungs. Available here:

<https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/Cardiologists-establish-how-e-cigarettes-damage-the-brain-blood-vessels-and-lungs>

[iv] Health Research Board. 2020. Electronic cigarette use and tobacco cigarette smoking initiation in adolescents: An evidence review

[v] CDC. 2023. Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults. Available here:

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html

[vi] Truth initiative. 2021. A toxic, plastic problem: E-cigarette waste and the environment. Available here:

<https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/toxic-plastic-problem-e-cigarette-waste-and-environment>

[vii] King, Ben. 2023. Five million vapes thrown away every week – research. Available here: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-66740556>

[viii] Byrne, Stephen. (2023). Let's talk about disposable vapes. Voice Ireland. Available here:

<https://www.voiceireland.org/news/bandisposablevapes>

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To learn more about vaping:



**Irish Heart
Foundation**

The National Stroke & Heart Charity



Websites:

- **Truth Initiative - E-cigarette waste and the environment:**
<https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/toxic-plastic-problem-e-cigarette-waste-and-environment>
- **My Waste - what to do with e-cigarettes and vapes:**
<https://www.mywaste.ie/what-to-do-with/e-cigarettes-e-cig-vapes/>
- **The Truth - Vaping X Health:**
<https://www.thetruth.com/vaping-x-health>
- **Quick facts on the risks of E-Cigarettes for Kids and Teens:**
https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html



Videos:

- **FYI: Investigates - Kids Who Vape:** This documentary investigates why there's been such a rapid increase in the popularity of vapes.
<https://youtu.be/i4G3GP3vPW0>
- **SPHE Healthy Choices - Nicotine Addiction:** This video explains how nicotine makes vaping addictive.
<https://youtu.be/gjwhcGAuZC4>
- **RCSI My Health: Vaping - What Does the Science Tell Us?** This video explains how vaping affects young people's health
<https://youtu.be/PvwlHPwHR4o>