

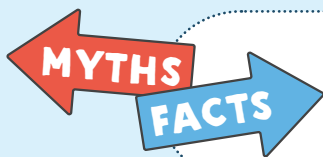
# MYTHS ABOUT ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES AND NICOTINE VAPING PRODUCTS



Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are battery-operated devices that heat a liquid into a vapour for breathing in (inhalation). Using an e-cigarette is commonly known as 'vaping' and the vapour can look similar to cigarette smoke.

E-cigarettes may look like cigarettes, cigars, pipes, pens or memory sticks. They may be used to inhale nicotine vaping products, or nicotine-free 'e-liquids' or 'e-juices'.

There are a lot of myths about e-cigarettes and vaping products. It is important as a carer that you are aware of the facts. If you have heard that e-cigarettes or vaping can help you or the person you are caring for to quit smoking, you should first speak with your doctor.



Here we address some common myths to help you have these conversations, understand the risks of using nicotine vaping products, as well as how to continue to access them for smoking cessation with appropriate medical advice.

There are also other factsheets that may be useful to you as a carer:

- > Nicotine Replacement Therapy or Nicotine Vaping Products?
- > How can I access nicotine vaping products for myself or the person I care for?
- > Tips for talking to a doctor to help quit or reduce smoking
- > Tips for talking to the person you care for about smoking, vaping and quitting
- > Nicotine Vaping and Young People

**MYTH**

**E-cigarettes are safe if you don't use nicotine.**

**FACT**

**Even without nicotine, e-cigarettes are not considered safe.**

Vaping aerosols do not only contain water vapour as commonly believed.

The liquids used in e-cigarettes may:

- » contain some of the same chemicals found in tobacco cigarettes,
- » contain toxic chemicals including those that add flavour, which are known to be cancer-causing agents or cause DNA damage,
- » contain high levels of heavy metals, and
- » sometimes contain nicotine even if it is labelled as 'nicotine free'.

E-cigarettes are unregulated, which means there are no consequences for a manufacturer who doesn't label their product accurately. With or without nicotine, all e-liquid solutions used in vaping contain a mixture of unregulated and harmful chemicals and additives.

No one is fully aware of vaping's long-term health effects, but studies have found that just 5 minutes of vaping can cause changes to how the lungs can function, airway inflammation, cough, sore throat and dry mouth. Other short-term health effects include nausea, vomiting and chest pain.

E-liquids can cause poisoning if they are swallowed or come in contact with the skin or eyes in children and adults, even if they do not contain nicotine. **Please seek urgent medical attention if you think that you, or anyone else, may have been exposed to or swallowed an e-liquid.** Emergency services can be contacted by calling 000 and the Poisons Information Centre can be contacted by calling 131 126.

**MYTH**

**Anyone can buy nicotine vaping products in Australia, overseas or online.**

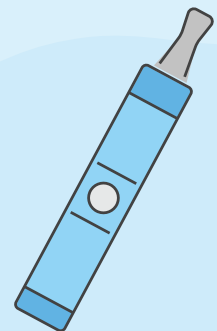
**FACT**

**From 1 October 2021, in Australia all e-cigarettes that contain nicotine require a prescription.**

The sale of nicotine e-cigarettes and liquid nicotine to someone without a doctor's prescription is illegal. This includes importing nicotine e-cigarette products and refills from overseas websites, or bringing them in from overseas travel.

Nicotine vaping products can only be legally used by the person named on the prescription - they cannot be legally supplied to friends or family members in Australia or overseas.

There are no changes to using e-cigarettes that **do not** contain nicotine or other illegal ingredients.



**MYTH**

There is no risk to others if someone uses an e-cigarette.

**FACT**

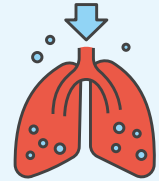
The vapour from e-cigarettes can be harmful to others.



Passive or second-hand smoking occurs when a non-smoker involuntarily breathes in smoke from other people's cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars or pipes.

Vaping products actually produce a fine spray of chemicals and particles. The aerosol from passive vaping also contains other chemicals not present in tobacco cigarettes.

Even short-term exposure to the vapour can irritate eyes and airways and worsen respiratory conditions, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and chronic bronchitis.

**MYTH**

E-cigarettes can be used anywhere and by anyone if they don't contain nicotine.

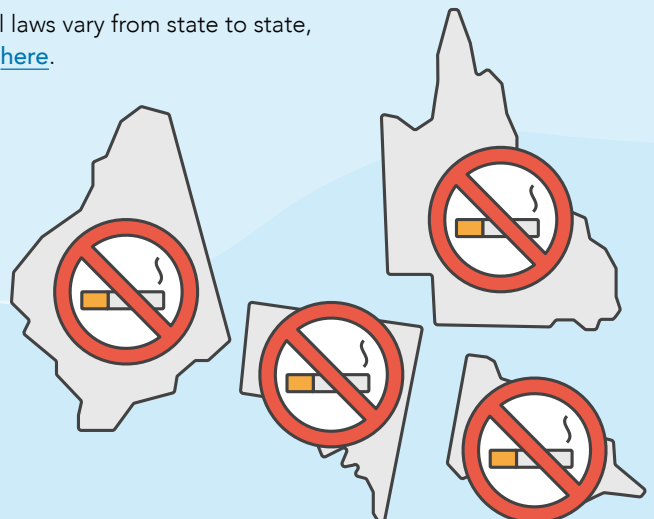
**FACT**

E-cigarettes cannot be sold to people under 18 years of age and you in most cases you can't use them anywhere there is a non-smoking sign.

In most states and territories, even if the e-cigarette contains no nicotine:

- » you can't use e-cigarettes in public places where you're also prohibited from smoking cigarettes.
- » It is illegal to sell e-cigarettes or any accessories or vaping products to, or buy them for, anyone under the age of 18, even if they do not contain nicotine.

Smoke-free and tobacco control laws vary from state to state, so check your state's legislation [here](#).



**MYTH****E-cigarettes help you to quit smoking.****FACT****E-cigarettes containing nicotine are not first-line treatments for smoking cessation.**

E-cigarettes have not been approved by the TGA, it is illegal to market or promote e-cigarettes as a product that can help people quit smoking. They are sometimes marketed as a way to quit smoking but there's not enough evidence to show that they help – or are safe.

People using e-cigarettes are three times more likely to smoke tobacco cigarettes than those who have not used e-cigarettes, and former smokers who use e-cigarettes are more likely to relapse and start smoking again.<sup>1</sup>

Many e-cigarette users appear to be continuing to use other tobacco products at the same time (dual users). Dual users may be exposing themselves to even higher levels of toxins.

The most successful approach is behavioural support combined with medicines and approved nicotine patches, gums and lozenges. If you or the person you care for need additional support to quit smoking, speak to your Doctor or pharmacist or call **Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848)**.

<sup>1</sup> Banks E, Beckwith K, Joshy G. Summary report on use of e-cigarettes and relation to tobacco smoking uptake and cessation, relevant to the Australian context. National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health: Australian National University; 2020

**SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

- » Australian Government Department of Health webpages:
  - [‘About e-cigarettes’](#)
  - [‘About passive smoking’](#)
  - [‘e-cigarettes and personal vaporisers’](#)
- » Statement from the Chief Medical Officer [‘E-cigarettes linked to severe lung illness’](#)
- » [‘Smoking and tobacco laws in Australia’](#)
- » Lung Foundation of Australia [‘E-cigarettes and vaping’](#)
- » Better Health Channel [‘E-liquids for use in e-cigarettes’](#)
- » healthdirect [‘E-cigarettes \(vaping\)’](#)
- » Therapeutic Goods Administration [‘Nicotine vaping products: Information for consumers’](#)
- » Alcohol and Drug Foundation [‘e-cigarettes webpage’](#)

**REMEMBER!**

Seek support from your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about how to help someone access nicotine vaping products or support with smoking cessation. You can also phone the **Quitline on 13 7848**.

Visit the Carer Gateway website at [carergateway.gov.au/help-advice](https://carergateway.gov.au/help-advice) or call them on 1800 422 737 to find local services and support for carers.

All factsheets can be found at [carersaustralia.com.au/medicine-safety/smoking-cessation-nicotine-products-and-e-cigarettes](https://carersaustralia.com.au/medicine-safety/smoking-cessation-nicotine-products-and-e-cigarettes)

