

A message from the Chief Public Health Officer



Health risks of e-cigarettes / vapes

Dear Parents and Carers

As the Chief Public Health Officer but also as a parent and a paediatrician, I have been very concerned about young people's access, use and in some cases addiction to e-cigarettes/vapes. You may well have felt the same.

South Australian laws ban the general sale of nicotine-containing e-cigarettes but investigations have shown that regardless of what the packaging says, the vast majority of vapes found in Australia (including 'single-use vapes') contain nicotine and often in high amounts. Nicotine is colourless, odourless and tasteless and therefore extremely difficult to detect and police. Nicotine is a schedule 4 Prescription Only Poison because of its harmful effects on humans.

We are also seeing increasing numbers of parents ringing the Poisons Information line after finding very young children have either inhaled or ingested nicotine from e-cigarettes.

The nicotine in one e-cigarette is equal to 50 cigarettes and can be even higher. Nicotine is highly addictive and children with a nicotine dependency may have difficulties concentrating in class, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, irritability, restlessness, frustration, anger and strong cravings to relieve symptoms with repeat nicotine exposure.

If you find your child is vaping it would be natural to feel upset and even angry. Instead, I strongly encourage you to be as supportive as possible because your young person may find stopping very difficult, they will need your help and they may even need advice from a doctor or healthcare professional.

Alternatively, support your child to call Quitline anonymously on 13 78 48. Quitline is a child safe and child friendly service that will respect and support children and young people in age-appropriate ways, that are also culturally safe and inclusive.

SA Health is working with the Department for Education to implement a Vaping Action Plan. Strategies include information for students, teachers, and parents and carers on the harms of vaping and supports available, and improving guidance to schools on managing incidents involving vaping.

While smoking and vaping is prohibited at all school premises and activities in South Australia, it is important to remind your child that there will be no repercussions if they seek support from you or their school to stop vaping, or bring issues to the school's attention.

Reducing access to vapes is obviously key to protecting young people from nicotine addiction. I was delighted with the recent Commonwealth Government announcement to ban all e-cigarettes for recreational use and tighten border controls on these products. Soon, the only way to obtain any form of e-cigarette will be from a pharmacist on a doctor's prescription for smoking cessation.

Importantly, funding will also be allocated to help people to quit vaping and measures put in place to ensure those people do not take up smoking cigarettes instead. This will include supporting our children who have developed a nicotine addiction.

Carers and schools will continue to play an important role in the implementation of the State's Vaping Action Plan. Please visit the SA Health website at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vaping where you will find a number of resources about vaping, including fact sheets for young people, parents and carers.

To learn more about the Vaping Action Plan, please visit the Department for Education's website at www.education.sa.gov.au/vaping.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Spurrer', written in a cursive style.

PROFESSOR NICOLA SPURRIER
Chief Public Health Officer
Public Health Division

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