

Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group vaping guidance

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ASH receives funding from:

- Cancer Research UK
- British Heart Foundation

Guidance

- Challenge Group guidance on vaping during pregnancy has been updated to cover the latest evidence/policy developments.
- Designed to support professionals to have evidence-based conversations and respond to concerns/questions.
- Our resources include:
 - Detailed FAQ-style briefing for professionals
 - Key messages briefing for professionals
 - Infographic for patients
- Available online here: <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/use-of-electronic-cigarettes-before-during-and-after-pregnancy-leaflets-and-infographics>

Endorsed by:





Frequently asked questions & suggested responses

General Information

1. What are vapes?

Vapes, also called e-cigarettes, are designed for users to inhale nicotine through an aerosol commonly referred to as vapour, rather than smoke. They work by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerine, and flavourings. They come in many different shapes and sizes, ranging from disposable, single-use products (which are due to be banned in England, Scotland and Wales) to larger devices which users can adapt and fill with their own liquid, as well as compact 'pod' systems which use e-liquid capsules. Unlike cigarettes, vapes don't contain or burn tobacco and don't produce tar or carbon monoxide, which are known to be very harmful to babies. For data recording purposes, a woman who has stopped smoking completely and switched to vaping is classified as a non-smoker.

Single-use, disposable vapes have become increasingly popular over the last few years. These products contain the same ingredients as reusable vapes and work the same way. However, they typically cannot be refilled once they run out and should be recycled, not thrown away. **Single-use vapes are due to be banned in England, Scotland and Wales from 1st June 2025. People using single-use vapes should be encouraged to switch to a re-usable vape before the ban takes effect.**

People can find their nearest vape recycling point here: <https://www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk/how-to-recycle-electronics/what-electronics-can-be-recycled/recycle-vapes/>

Further info:

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Vapes generally consist of a battery, a vaporising chamber and e-liquid. The liquid can be

contained in a sealed cartridge or can be added by the user into a refillable tank. Vapes are not the same as heated tobacco or heat-not-burn products. Unlike vapes, heated tobacco products contain tobacco and although likely to be less harmful than cigarettes, they are not harmless. It is recommended that pregnant women stop using tobacco completely to maximise the benefits to their health.

2. How safe are vapes?

The most recent **evidence review** commissioned by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) in 2022 concluded that vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking in the short and medium term. However, vaping is not risk-free, particularly for people who have never smoked.²⁰ For pregnant women, one large trial found that vapes were more effective than nicotine patches for smoking cessation.² A secondary analysis found that regular use of vapes or NRT during pregnancy does not appear to be associated with any adverse effects in mothers or their babies.⁴ NRT products like nicotine patches are licenced for use during pregnancy. NICE states that NRT 'should be considered alongside behavioural support, at the earliest opportunity in pregnancy and continued after pregnancy if needed'.⁵

Although e-cigarette vapour has been found to contain some toxicants also found in tobacco smoke, these are either at much lower levels or at levels not associated with serious health risk.²⁰ Most importantly, vapes do not contain tobacco or carbon monoxide, which is particularly harmful to developing babies. The risk of fire caused by vapes is significantly lower than the risk posed by combustible cigarettes.²⁰

Further info:

A 2022 **NIHR-funded randomised control trial** looking at the safety and efficacy of vapes

Briefing for professionals

- FAQ style
- Includes suggested responses and supporting evidence
- Detailed version and shorter key messages leaflet

Vaping during pregnancy



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How safe are vapes?

- Vapes (e-cigarettes) are significantly less harmful to health than tobacco cigarettes
- If using a vape (vaping) helps you stay smokefree, it is far safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke
- Vapes should not be used by children or non-smokers

Can I use a vape to help me quit smoking?

- Yes, vapes can help you to quit and are much less harmful than smoking
- Nicotine replacements such as patches and gum are licenced for use during pregnancy

Can I keep smoking a little bit if I'm also vaping?

- NO - Every cigarette causes damage both to you and your baby
- Stopping smoking early in pregnancy significantly reduces the risk of damage to your baby
- You can vape as often as you need to stay smokefree

Is secondhand e-cigarette vapour harmful?

- There is no evidence of harm to others from e-cigarette vapour, although you could consider not allowing vaping in your home and car as a precaution
- Secondhand tobacco smoke is very harmful to you and your baby

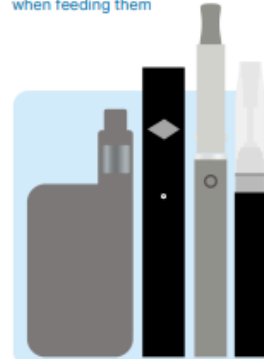
Is nicotine harmful for my baby?

- Both vapes and cigarettes contain nicotine, which makes them addictive. However, most of the harm from smoking comes from the other chemicals in tobacco smoke. Nicotine replacement products like patches and gum are licenced for use during pregnancy

Can I vape if I'm breastfeeding?

- Yes. If vaping is helping you to quit smoking and stay smokefree, you should carry on with it, including while breastfeeding. As a precaution, you could avoid vaping directly around babies when feeding them

You should only use legal vapes purchased from a reputable source. Illegal vapes often exceed restrictions on nicotine content and may contain banned ingredients.



Vaping is far less harmful than smoking

- Nicotine in cigarettes is addictive, but almost all of the harm from smoking comes from the toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke
- Vapes don't produce tar or carbon monoxide which is the most harmful part of smoking for developing babies
- As well as being less harmful, vaping can be much cheaper than smoking

For more info on quitting smoking ask your midwife, GP or pharmacy team or search NHS Smokefree.

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Tommy's

Royal College
of Midwives

Sands
Supporting & protecting South's charity

Infographic for patients

- FAQ style
- Includes key info for parents and families

Key messages

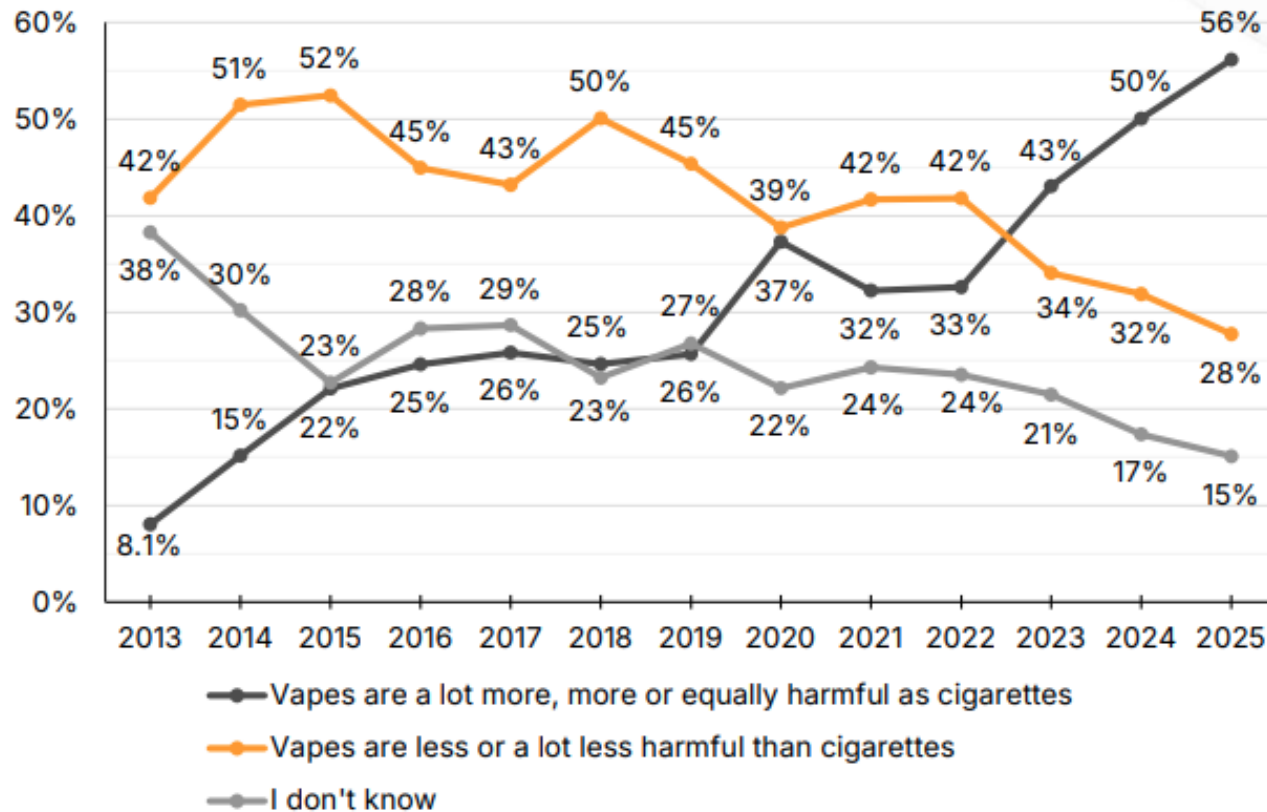
- In the short and medium term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking. However, vaping is unlikely to be risk-free, particularly for people who have never smoked. We do not have data on the long-term health impact of vaping – though it is likely to be far less than for smoking.
- While licensed NRT products such as nicotine patches, gum and inhalers are the recommended option, vapes appear to be more effective for smoking cessation during pregnancy than nicotine patches. Regular use of vapes or NRT during pregnancy does not appear to be associated with any adverse effects in mothers or their babies. If a pregnant woman chooses to vape and if that helps her to quit smoking and stay smokefree, she should be supported to do so.
- Unlike cigarettes, vapes don't contain or burn tobacco and don't produce tar or carbon monoxide, which are known to be very harmful to babies.
- Many services have integrated vaping into their stop smoking support offer for pregnant women. This should not be discouraged if it is helping women to quit smoking and stay smokefree.

Key messages

- Youth vaping – Vaping is an effective quitting aid for adult smokers but should not be used by under-18s. It is illegal to sell/provide vapes to someone aged under 18.
- Nicotine – While nicotine can be addictive, it is not associated with the vast majority of the harms from smoking. Nicotine in the form of NRT is widely prescribed for smoking cessation to adults, pregnant women and can be prescribed to children aged 12+.
- Non-smokers vaping – Someone who vapes and has never smoked should consider quitting vaping as it is not risk-free and is addictive.
- Vaping cessation – People who have quit smoking through vaping should be advised to keep vaping as long as necessary to stay smokefree. It is important not to pressure people to stop vaping as this may cause them to relapse to smoking.
- Secondhand vapour – There is no evidence of harm to others from e-cigarette vapour, although it is possible that longer term exposure in an enclosed space may carry some low-level risk. Pregnant women/parents could consider not allowing vaping indoors or around children as a precaution. The key thing is that pregnant women and babies are not exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke which is very harmful.

(Mis)perceptions of harm

Figure 21. Perceptions of harm of vapes compared with cigarettes, GB adults who have heard of vapes (2013-2025)



- Vast majority of adults (and smokers) think vaping is at least as harmful as smoking
- Big shift since 2022, driven by increasingly sensationalist reporting on vaping
- This leads to:
 - Fewer people quitting smoking
 - More people dual using without fully switching to vaping
 - People who have switched to vaping relapsing to smoking

Where can I go for reliable information?

- ASH, Challenge Group – if the evidence changes, our guidance will change
- NICE [NG209]
- NCSCT [guidance](#) on vaping for health professionals
- NHS [website](#)
- Royal College of Physicians 2024 [evidence review](#)
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities 2022 [evidence review](#)
- Health practitioners should base their advice on good quality evidence such as systematic reviews from reputable institutions/experts – not media headlines.

Incoming vaping regulations

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

- Will ban vape advertising and give government powers to regulate vape branding, packaging, flavours, colours and display to reduce appeal to children.
- Retail licensing and registration regime for the sale of tobacco and vapes.

Disposable vape ban – Disposable (single-use) vapes were banned in June.

Levy on vape e-liquids – Flat-rate tax of £2.20 per 10ml bottle of vape liquid, to be introduced from October 2026.

These measures will play an important role in addressing youth vaping and illicit/underage sales, while ensuring vapes continue to be available to help adult smokers quit.

Key links and resources

- Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group. [Vaping before, during and after pregnancy: leaflets and infographics.](#)
- ASH. [Vaping: what you need to know.](#)
- ASH. [Addressing common myths about vaping: Putting the evidence in context.](#)
- OHID. [Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update.](#)
- Hartmann-Boyce J. et al. [Cochrane review: Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation.](#) 2022.
- NCSCT. [E-learning: Vaping: a guide for healthcare professionals.](#)
- NCSCT. [Standard Treatment Programme for Pregnant Women.](#)
- NICE [NG209]: [Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence](#)

Questions?

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