Chapter 2: Healthy living and health risks

Vaping

Professor David Thomas

Key messages

- The prevalence of e-cigarette use in Australia is increasing, especially among young adults, and the Australian e-cigarette market is evolving rapidly, with most now using newer disposable e-cigarette devices with higher concentrations of nicotine.[1]
- State, territory and Commonwealth governments have introduced varied and evolving legislation to restrict the sale, use and possession of e-cigarettes.[2]
- The lack of evidence about the impact of e-cigarettes on health outcomes does not mean that e-cigarettes are harmless, just that there is insufficient evidence yet about their safety and harms.[3]
- There is almost no high-quality research evidence about what works to prevent patients from starting to vape e-cigarettes or to help patients quit vaping. This will change as researchers catch up.
- Guidance on the use of e-cigarettes to assist smoking cessation is provided in Chapter 2: Healthy living and health risks, Smoking.
- This topic uses the generic terms 'vaping' and 'e-cigarettes' and does not discuss heat-not-burn cigarettes, because they are effectively illegal in Australia and their use is rare.[2]

Recommendations*

* These recommendations apply to any electronic cigarette that heats a liquid to produce an aerosol that can be inhaled and exhaled. This does not include heat-not-burn cigarettes, which are illegal in Australia.

Who/target population	What	When	Strength of recommendation	Key source(s) and reference(s)
Preventive activity: Screening				
People aged 10 years and over	Ask all patients whether they vape e-cigarettes and record vaping status in the clinical record (except in areas where vaping is uncommon)	Opportunistically	Good practice point	Position statement[4,5]
Preventive activity: Behavioural				
Young people aged 11–17 years	Advise all children who do not vape to not start vaping (except in areas where vaping is uncommon)	Opportunistically	Good practice point	International guideline[6]

Recommendations

Who/target population	What	When	Strength of recommendation	Key source(s) and reference(s)
Preventive activity: Behavioural (continued)				
Adults who vape but do not smoke	Advise all adults who vape but do not smoke to quit vaping	Opportunistically	Good practice point	Position statement[5]
Adults who vape and smoke	Advise all adults who vape and smoke to quit smoking, and then quit vaping as soon as they can to prevent going back to smoking	Opportunistically, whenever possible	Good practice point	International guideline[6]
Preventive activity: Medication				
Adults who vape	There is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of smoking cessation pharmacotherapies (nicotine replacement therapy [NRT], varenicline and bupropion) to help with vaping cessation	N/A	Good practice point	
All people	Complement the above individual-based preventive activities with support for public health approaches to vaping prevention; for example: • effectively banning sales to minors • banning flavours that appeal to young people • public education campaigns about vaping • including vaping in smoke-free rules and laws	Opportunistically	Good practice point	Position statement[4]

Implementation tips

- Use discussions about e-cigarettes and vaping as an opportunity to talk about the harms of smoking and the benefits of quitting smoking.
- Respond to community concerns about vaping with evidence, avoiding overstatement. Monitor and critically appraise the emerging research evidence.
- Contribute to discussions about the emerging public health response to e-cigarettes.
- Avoid all contact with tobacco companies, even when they claim to be shifting away from cigarettes.
- In some remote areas where there is as yet no vaping, it may be best to not mention vaping (including vaping cessation and preventing vaping uptake), because this may inadvertently increase curiosity about e-cigarettes.

Useful resources

Other resources for health professionals

- Quitline: telephone 13 7848 or 13QUIT or go online (racgp.link/47rhiNW) to arrange a free call back and follow-up telephone calls
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): The *2022 CEO statement on electronic cigarettes* and associated literature reviews summarise the latest evidence about the harmful effects of e-cigarettes racgp.link/3XrZJbR
- Cancer Council Victoria: *Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues* is a regularly updated comprehensive review of the major issues in smoking and health in Australia (racgp.link/4do8Pwt), with an in-depth discussion of e-cigarettes (racgp.link/3B2SHmp)

References

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