

Teenage Vaping – Information for Parents/Carers

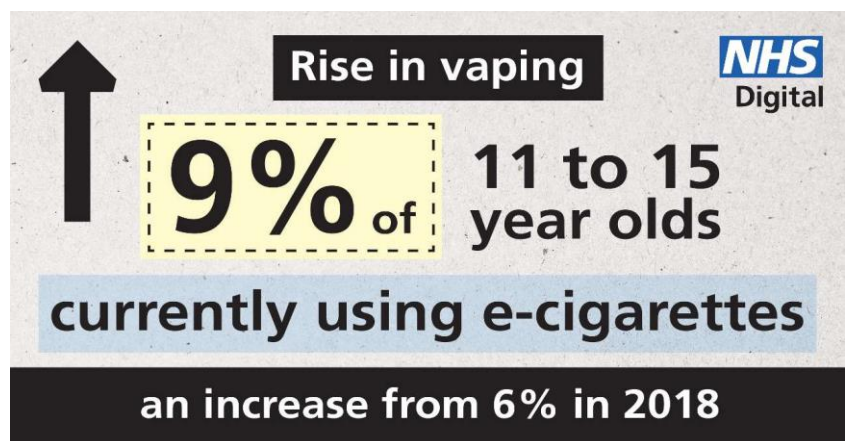
No doubt you will have seen much in the news recently around the issues of teenage vaping. It is quite a complicated and confusing picture, particularly for our young people. The messages from the media, NHS, e-cigarette lobby and other groups are open to misinterpretation.



We thought it was important that we talk to our whole school community about these issues. This week I led assemblies to all year groups (except Year 7 who will be next week). The aim of the assemblies is to help our young people understand the facts around vapes, know what the risks are and how to minimise the risk by making good decisions based on reliable information.

Here are the headline messages from those assemblies:

- The most recent data from the NHS shows that in 2022 9% of 11-15 year olds regularly vape. It is assumed that this figure is increasing.
- 21% of 15 year old girls in England regularly vape – that's roughly 1 in 5.
- Most young people don't smoke or vape.
- Vapes and vaping products containing nicotine, like tobacco, are age restricted. It is illegal to sell them to under 18s or for an adult to buy them on their behalf.



(Source: [NHS Digital](https://www.nhs.uk))

Why do young people vape?

It's the nicotine in a vape that gives the 'buzz' – leads to adrenaline release, increase in heart rate and blood pressure and faster breathing. Nicotine also stimulates pleasure and reward centres in brain. Longer term users build up a tolerance to these effects, and may experience: mild stimulation, increased ability to concentrate, relaxation, temporary reduction in urge to vape.



What are the side effects?

Dizziness, headache, racing heart, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, feeling weak, coughing, dry mouth and throat, shortness of breath, mouth and throat irritation, headaches

What are the risks?

- Nicotine vaping is recommended by the NHS as a way for adults to give up smoking.
- It is not recommended for non-smokers, children and young people under 18.
- Vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking but it is not harmless.
- Nicotine is a highly addictive substance and is very hard to give up once you have started.
- There is some evidence that nicotine has a bigger effect on the adolescent brain.
- There are strict regulations on the contents of vapes in the UK to minimise nicotine content and presence of other chemicals, but illegal vaping products are available which may not meet the UK safety standards.



Can you become addicted to vapes?

Yes - Nicotine is an addictive substance and you may become dependent on vapes, particularly if you vape regularly. Giving up nicotine can be difficult because the body has to get used to functioning without it. You may get withdrawal symptoms such as cravings, irritability, anxiety, trouble concentrating, headaches and other mental and physical symptoms.

What about illegal vapes?

Illegal vapes are also widely available in the UK. For example, vapes containing THC - the active ingredient in cannabis. Vapes containing THC are illegal in the UK. THC is a Class B drug, like cannabis. This means it is illegal to have it, give it away or sell it. This could lead to prison or unlimited fines. There is no regulation of the contents of illegal vapes – you have no idea what other ingredients there are, or their strength.

(Source: [Frank](#)) **FRANK**

3 Myths about vaping:

Vapes are more harmful than cigarettes – Not True

Cigarettes and tobacco are much more dangerous than vapes, as the smoke contains carcinogens such as tar, plus other chemicals.

Vapes are more addictive than cigarettes – Not True

Legal vapes contain less nicotine than cigarettes (illegal vapes contents are unregulated however)

Vapes are recommended as a safer alternative to smoking – Not true for everyone.

Vapes are only recommended for adults who are addicted to smoking to help them give up. The message is clear – if you don't smoke then don't start to vape.

Is vaping a problem at UCC?

Like all schools in the UK, UCC has seen a rapid rise in the prevalence of vaping. The availability of cheap, attractive and disposable vapes has helped drive this increase, along with the ever-present influence of social media. We have had to adapt very quickly from a situation of next to zero incidents of smoking in the past, to becoming aware that some students are likely to be vaping on a regular basis in toilet cubicles, on school buses and on route to and from school.

Since September 2022 we have confiscated over 40 vaping items. These are shown below. As you can see, the vapes come in variety of sizes, designs and flavours.



As vapes have become disposable they have also become smaller and much easier to conceal and can also easily be mistaken for make up or pens.

The age restriction labelling on vapes is clear and carries health warnings similar to cigarettes.



Despite restrictions on advertising and promotion, many vape manufacturers clearly target young people in the packaging, presentation and flavouring.



What are UCC doing about vaping?

Like all schools, we have to take drugs, alcohol, smoking and vaping very seriously. These are all either illegal or age restricted items for young people. We have a duty of care to protect our students and their families from such illegal activity.

- If a student is seen vaping at school or on the journey to or from school then we will take it very seriously – parents/carers will be informed and the student will be suspended from school for at least 1 day.
- If students are behaving suspiciously (for example, occupying toilet cubicles with other students) or it is reported to us that students are in possession of vaping (or other illicit) equipment, then we will take this very seriously. This will involve us asking the student to empty their pockets and bags. (this will be carried out in line with the DFE guidance on Searching, screening and confiscation [here](#).)
- If a student is found to be in possession of vaping (or other illicit) equipment, then we will take this very seriously. The items will be confiscated, parents/carers will be informed, and the student will be suspended for at least 1 day.

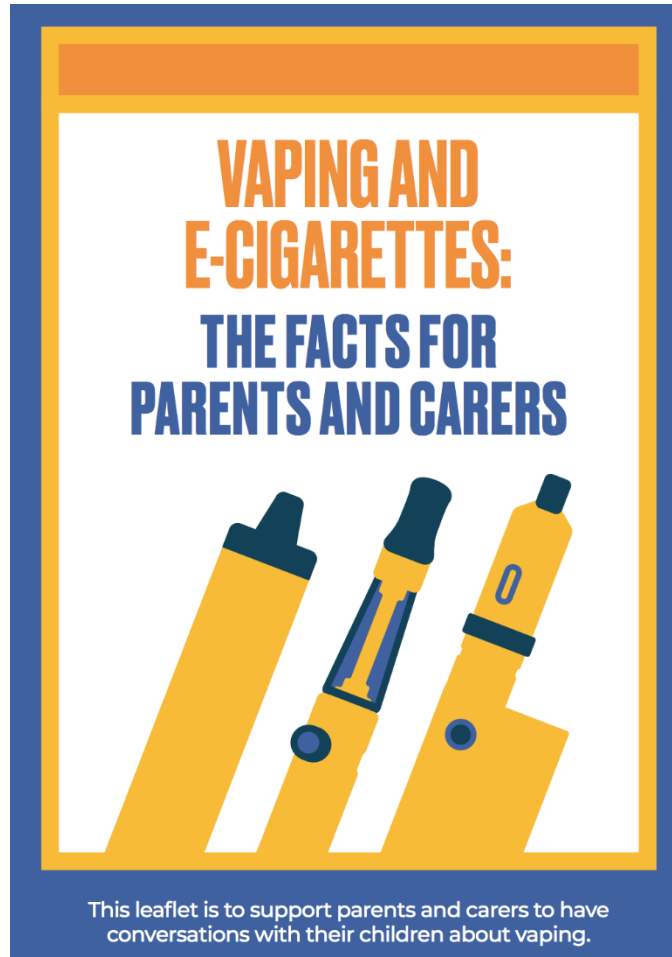


On an everyday basis, we have increased our supervision of student toilet areas, although of course, we cannot control what goes on behind cubicle doors. We have plans to re-develop our toilet blocks to make them easier to supervise and monitor, but this will take time.

We will, of course, continue to educate and encourage our young people to make good choices.

What can you do as parents and carers?

Take a look at [this leaflet](#) which gives more information and suggests ways to talk to your child about these issues.



Watch [this video](#) that we have shown the students which provides a good summary of the key issues and messages.



Be vigilant and be curious

Be vigilant in looking out for vaping equipment – our experience is that this is an issue that has affected students from Years 7 - 11. Don't assume that your child is not involved – peer pressure and social media are extremely influential, and we have found students to be highly creative in their deception.

What if I am worried that my child is addicted to nicotine?

Get in touch with our wellbeing and safeguarding team here at UCC. We are able to signpost and organise support students with addiction issues via Turning Point.

Other sources of information:

[Action on Smoking and Health - ASH](#)

[NHS Digital Report on Vaping](#)

[Parent's Digest report on rise in teenage vaping](#)

['Talk to Frank' – Reliable and up to date information on Vaping \(and all other illicit substances\)](#)