



Vaping to quit smoking

A 5-step guide for adult hospital patients with smoking-related conditions to quit through vaping

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About this guide

Smoking is the leading cause of premature death and disease – claiming the lives of around 80,000 people in the UK every year. It causes 70% of lung cancer cases and is linked with other serious conditions including heart disease and stroke.

Vaping is a proven quitting tool which is significantly less harmful than smoking. The latest data from Action on Smoking and Health UK reveals half of all quit attempts over the past five years involved a vape.

This 5-step guide has been designed to successfully support adult smokers looking to quit through vaping.

Produced by the UK Vaping Industry Association – which is the leading trade body for the sector – this guide draws on the knowledge and experience of our retail members, whose advice has been instrumental in helping adult smokers make the switch.

Every smoker is different, and therefore it's critical that you get the right support you need on your own smoke-free journey. This guide, and other information on vaping, can be downloaded from www.ukvia.co.uk/healthcarehub

“When I see patients who smoke they are already sick with smoking-related disease and have often given up hope of ever stopping. Vaping is a valuable tool in our armoury to tackle smoking, particularly for patients who are heavily addicted.”

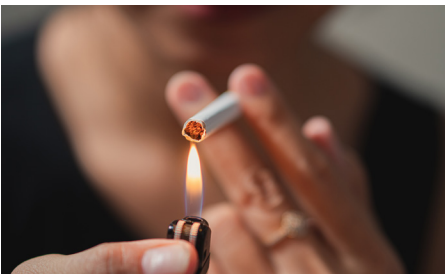
Dr Ruth Sharrock, clinical lead for tobacco dependency, North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board

Step 1: Understanding your smoking habits

Understanding your smoking habits, lifestyle choices and health goals is essential information for healthcare professionals, stop-smoking and vape specialists to give you customised advice on the best course of action to quit smoking.

Questions you may be asked:





- How long have you been smoking and when did you first start?
- On average, how many cigarettes do you smoke in a day?
- When do you normally first start smoking on a typical day?
- Do you drink alcohol and how often? (Alcohol will increase your craving to smoke)
- If you have gone back to smoking after trying to quit before, what's the reason behind this?
- What are the reasons you want to quit and is your goal to quit tobacco or both tobacco and nicotine?



Step 2: Finding the best device for you

There are a variety of vape devices available to you, ranging from simple pod systems to more customisable mods. Each device type has its own unique benefits, but all could be effective in helping you move away from cigarettes.

Some vape devices include:





Closed Pod	Open Pod	Vape Pen	Mods
			
Compact & lightweight	Compact & lightweight	Varied battery life	Long battery life
User-friendly	User-friendly	Popular amongst first time vapers	Can be customised to allow for changes in power and airflow
Mirror conventional cigarette experience	Mirror conventional cigarette experience	Rechargeable	Suitable for more experienced vapers
Replaceable pre-filled pods	Refillable pods	Mirror conventional cigarette experience	Refillable
			Varied power for nicotine delivery

From June 2025, disposable vapes – which were the entry device for many quitters due to their simplicity and low initial cost – will be banned in the UK. Rechargeable and refillable devices can also be easy to use and will ultimately help save you money in the long run.

Step 3: Identifying your ideal nicotine level

The required nicotine strength level in vape devices will largely depend on your smoking frequency but will also be shaped by your goals and whether you want to quit tobacco or quit tobacco and nicotine. The chart below provides a standard framework of advice on typical nicotine concentrations for smokers transitioning over to vaping.

As with e-cigarette devices, advice on the right type of level of nicotine concentration is critical. It is important to ensure that your nicotine intake closely mirrors the same levels as when smoking.

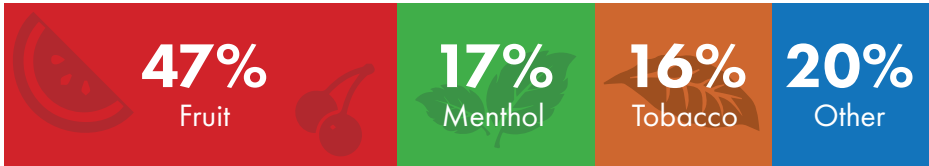
Type of smoker	Cigarettes smoked	Recommended nicotine concentration
 Social smoker	One or two a week	3mg
 Light smoker	Less than 10 cigarettes per day	3-6mg
 Average smoker	Up to 20 cigarettes per day	6-12mg
 Heavy smoker	More than a full packet per day	12-18mg
Non-nicotine e-liquids are also available (0mg)		

Step 4: Know your flavour options

Flavours play a key role in supporting smokers to quit and stay off cigarettes. Not everyone has the same taste and you should be open to trying different flavours. This is a critical part of your quitting journey.

More than 95% of stop smoking services surveyed by the UKVIA said they offer vapes to help adult smokers quit and 70% of these said fruit options are, or are amongst, the favourites for adults.

According to Action on Smoking and Health, the most popular flavours are:



Step 5: Remember every cigarette not smoked is a win

Don't worry if you don't feel you are progressing on your quitting journey as quickly as you'd like.

Just remember that stopping smoking is not a race to the finish line and every step away from cigarettes is a victory.

Planning is also key. Identifying and using the right products – whether vaping or a combination of nicotine replacement therapies – as well as getting the right support can make all the difference, such as from a health professional, your local stop smoking service or a specialist vape shop.



Your common vaping questions answered

How effective is vaping as a quitting tool?

Vaping has played an instrumental role in bringing the UK's smoking rates down to a record low level, helping some 5.2 million adults cut down on or move away from smoking in Great Britain alone.

Leading public health charity Action on Smoking and Health UK reports half of all successful quit attempts over the past five years have involved a vape.

A comprehensive analysis of data from over 300 clinical studies involving more than 150,000 people found nicotine e-cigarettes are amongst the most effective stop smoking tools available. It found using vapes to quit is more effective than using one or two Nicotine Replacement Therapies (such as gums or patches).

ASH UK | Cochrane

Is vaping better or worse than smoking?

Vaping is much less harmful than smoking – which is a leading cause of death and disease, leading to eight million deaths around the world every year and causing 7 in 10 lung cancer cases in the UK.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities – formerly Public Health England – maintains that vaping poses a 'small fraction of the risks of smoking'.

The latest data from Action on Smoking and Health UK reveals half of all smokers in Great Britain wrongly believe vaping is as or more harmful than smoking – the highest proportion on record. This mistrust in vaping is often associated with inaccurate or 'alarmist' media stories.

Sources: University College London | Cancer Research UK | OHID

Does vaping cause cancer?

Cancer Research UK, the world's largest independent funder of cancer research, maintains there is 'no good evidence that vaping causes cancer'.

It also says nicotine - the addictive chemical found in cigarettes, and some vape products - does not cause cancer and that 'people have safely used nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to stop smoking for many years'.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities says vaping poses a 'small fraction of the risks of smoking'. It also says there is 'significantly lower exposure to harmful substances from vaping compared with smoking, as shown by biomarkers association with the risk of cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions'.

Source: Cancer Research UK | OHID

Does vaping cause EVALI?

In 2019, there were reports that vaping had caused an outbreak of lung illness in the US called E-cigarette or Vaping-use Associated Lung Injury.

Despite the name, an investigation ultimately found the cases were linked to contaminated illegal products and NOT regular or long-term vaping. However, there are media stories as recently as 2024 that link vaping with EVALI.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities said there were 'lessons to be learnt from the mislabelled US EVALI outbreak' and stressed communications about the illness should separate vaping illicit substances from nicotine vaping.

Sources: OHID

Can vaping cause popcorn lung?

Popcorn lung (bronchiolitis obliterans) is a serious, but uncommon, lung disease caused by a build-up of scar tissue in the lungs which hinders the flow of air.

It got its name when workers in a popcorn factory developed the condition after breathing in the chemical diacetyl, which was used to give popcorn a buttery flavour.

According to Cancer Research UK:

- E-cigarettes don't cause the condition known as popcorn lung
- There have been no confirmed cases of popcorn lung reported in people who use e-cigarettes

Diacetyl is banned as a vape flavouring in the UK but it is one of the thousands of chemicals found in cigarette smoke.

Source: Cancer Research UK

Is vaping more affordable than smoking?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that the average price for a pack of 20 king size cigarettes in the UK was £16.45 (December 2024) which works out at more than £6,000 per year for a pack-a-day smoker.

By comparison, it is estimated that a vaper (who has totally switched from smoking) could expect to spend £343 per year if they are using a refillable tank kit, £359 if they are using a refillable pod system and £377 if they are using a refillable pod kits with removable coils.

In fact, according to a 2024 report from Action on Smoking and Health UK, saving money was the among the most common reasons given by vapers who are ex-smokers (8.9%) – the most cited reason was 'to help me stop smoking entirely' (28%).

Sources: ONS | Action on Smoking and Health UK | Vape Club

Q: Can I use other quit methods alongside vaping?

Yes, there are other quit methods such as gums and patches that people use alongside vaping successfully. It is also important to consider the role of behavioural support. Individuals will need to determine what's the best combination for them. However, vaping is now widely recognised as the most successful tool to quit smoking and consistently studies show it to be much more effective than NRTs.

Q: Where should I buy my vaping products from?

We would recommend devices and e-liquids are purchased from retail members of trade associations, such as the UK Vaping Industry Association, as they have to abide by a strict Code of Conduct which requires them to sell products which adhere to fully compliant levels of product quality, manufacturing and safety standards.