

What Are Vapes?

Worksheet 6

Vapes, short for vaporizers, are electronic devices that heat a liquid (e-liquid or vape juice) to produce an aerosol or vapor that is inhaled by the user. They are commonly used as an alternative to traditional cigarettes for vaping, which is the act of inhaling and exhaling the vapor produced by a vape device.

Vape devices typically consist of a battery, a heating element (coil), and a reservoir or cartridge containing the e-liquid. When the device is activated (often by pressing a button or inhaling), the battery heats the coil, which in turn vaporizes the e-liquid. The vapor produced is then inhaled by the user through a mouthpiece.

E-liquids used in vapes typically contain a combination of ingredients, including propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, flavourings, and nicotine (although nicotine-free options are also available). The flavourings in e-liquids can range from traditional tobacco flavours to fruit, dessert, or candy flavours.

Vapes come in various shapes, sizes, and designs, including disposable vape pens, refillable tank systems, and pod-based systems. They have gained popularity in recent years, particularly among young people, due to their perceived lower health risks compared to smoking traditional cigarettes, as well as the variety of flavours and customizable options available.

However, it's important to note that vapes are not without risks. While they may expose users to fewer harmful chemicals than traditional cigarettes, they still contain potentially harmful substances, including nicotine, which is highly addictive. Additionally, there have been concerns raised about the long-term health effects of vaping, as well as the increasing prevalence of vaping among youth and its potential impact on adolescent brain development.

Disposable vapes will be banned in the UK as part of ambitious government plans to tackle the rise in youth vaping and protect children's health.

The measure comes as part of the government's response to its consultation on smoking and vaping, which was launched in October 2023.

Recent figures show the number of children using vapes in the past 3 years has tripled. Use among younger children is also rising, with 9% of 11 to 15 year olds now using vapes. The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown and the nicotine contained within them can be highly addictive, with withdrawal sometimes causing anxiety, trouble concentrating and headaches. While vaping can play a role in helping adult smokers to quit, children should never vape.

Disposable vapes have been a key driver behind the alarming rise in youth vaping, with the proportion of 11 to 17 year old vapers using disposables increasing almost ninefold in the last 2 years.



Risks of Vapes:

1. Addiction:

Vapes often contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. Regular use of nicotine-containing vapes can lead to dependence and addiction.

2. Respiratory Issues:

Inhaling vapor from vapes, especially those containing nicotine or other additives, can irritate the respiratory system and lead to coughing, wheezing, and other respiratory symptoms.

3. Unknown Long-Term Effects

Vaping is a relatively new phenomenon, and the long-term health effects of vaping are not yet fully understood. Research is ongoing, but there are concerns about potential long-term risks, including respiratory issues, cardiovascular problems, and adverse effects on lung health.

4. Additives and Contaminants:

Some vape products may contain harmful additives or contaminants, including heavy metals, flavouring chemicals, and other toxins. Poorly regulated products may pose additional risks to health.

5. Youth Vaping Epidemic:

There has been a significant increase in vaping among youth in recent years, raising concerns about nicotine addiction and potential long-term health effects. Youth who vape may be at increased risk of nicotine dependence, impaired brain development, and other health problems.