

# ***Guidance for Health Workers in Aotearoa New Zealand on supporting people to stop vaping and using vaping to stop smoking.***

*FACT SHEET 3 OF 6:*

*The following information is taken from the original NZ Vaping Cessation Guidance document and covers the topics,*

- [ABC: Vaping to stop smoking](#)
  - [Ask](#)
  - [Brief advice](#)
  - [Cessation support](#)
- [Smokefree Service and other contacts](#)

## ABC: Vaping to stop smoking

This section draws upon the ‘ABC’ framework (‘Ask, give Brief advice, provide Cessation support’) for smoking cessation to provide practical guidance for health workers on supporting people to use vaping to stop smoking.

**If you are a health worker**, follow the left side of the diagram to screen for smoking, give brief advice, and make a referral to Smokefree Services.

**If you are a Smokefree Service provider or a health worker with expertise and time to provide support**, follow the right side of the diagram to navigate to the relevant sections of the Guidance to take a detailed history, give further advice, and provide cessation support.



## Ask

### Vaping Cessation

Use this section if you are a Smokefree Service provider or a health worker with expertise and time to provide further support and to take a detailed history as part of the 'Ask' step of the ABC pathway.

#### Key Points:

##### Take a smoking history for all clients.

- 'Do you currently smoke?'

##### Assess smoking dependence.

- Time to first cigarette
- Previous unsuccessful smoking quit attempts
- Self-perceived addiction to smoking

### Take a smoking history for all clients.

- Refer to *The New Zealand Guidelines for Helping People to Stop Smoking: 2021 update*.
- All health workers can screen people attending a health care service for smoking.
- Taking a partial smoking history is better than not asking at all.
- Document smoking status in the client's clinical records in provided templates or as free text.

## Assess smoking dependence (Table 2)

**Table 2. Assess smoking dependence**

Time to first cigarette	‘How long after waking do you smoke?’ Smoking within 30 minutes of waking in the morning indicates higher dependence.
Previous unsuccessful smoking quit attempts	‘Have you ever tried stopping smoking before?’ Having previous unsuccessful quit attempts indicates smoking dependence.
Self-perceived addiction to smoking	‘Would you say that you are very addicted to smoking, somewhat addicted to smoking, or not at all addicted to smoking?’ Self-perceived smoking addiction can be used as an indicator of dependence in general and clinical smoking populations (Chaiton et al 2017).

## Brief advice

### Vaping to stop smoking

Use this section if you are a Smokefree Service provider or a health worker with time and expertise to provide support and to give further advice as part of the 'Brief advice' step of the ABC pathway.

#### Key Points:

#### **Ask permission before giving personalised advice on using vaping to stop smoking.**

- 'I have some information to share with you, and it's up to you how you use it - would you like to hear more?'

#### **Address misconceptions about vaping compared to smoking (see also page 53).**

- For people who smoke, vaping is much less harmful than smoking.
- Nicotine vapes help people stop smoking.
- Vaping is not harmless: use nicotine vaping to stop smoking only after clients cannot stop smoking with current evidence-based approaches (NRT or non-NRT medications in combination with behavioural support and by best practice guidelines).
- Dual use of vapes and cigarettes is not advised.
- There is a risk of relapse back to smoking when vaping to stop smoking.
- The end goal is to stop smoking and vaping.

#### **Ask permission before giving personalised advice on using vaping to stop smoking.**

- Asking permission is a new recommendation included in the 'ABC pathway for helping people to stop smoking' since *The New Zealand Guidelines for Helping People to Stop*

*Smoking: 2021 Update.*

- Asking permission before giving advice is an important part of shared decision-making and enhances client engagement. For example: ‘I have some information to share with you, and it’s up to you how you use it – would you like to hear more?’
- Adopt a person-centred and non-judgemental approach and give clear, supportive, and personalised advice on the benefits of vaping to stop smoking. For example, discuss how vaping can help your client be smokefree and that this is the best thing that they can do for their health, linking the advice to a current health condition.
- In New Zealand, many people who currently smoke or recently stopped smoking incorrectly believe that vapes are as or more harmful compared to cigarettes or are unsure about whether vapes are less harmful than cigarettes (Guiney et al 2019). Use these talking points to address misconceptions about vaping and outline the harms of vaping compared to smoking (see also page 53).

**For people who smoke, vaping is less harmful than smoking.**

- Up to two in three smokers will die from smoking unless they stop (Banks et al 2015).
- Smoking cigarettes involves the combustion or burning of tobacco, which creates cancer-causing substances.
- Vapes heat e-liquids, which do not contain tobacco. The process of vaping does not involve the combustion or burning of tobacco.

- Nicotine in any form of delivery can be addictive, but it does not cause cancer.
- Based on evidence from a small number of studies, with the longest follow-up duration being two years (Lindson et al 2024), there is no serious harm from nicotine vaping.

### **Vaping helps people to stop smoking.**

- Vaping increases the chance of remaining smokefree by allowing people to manage nicotine cravings without the more harmful toxicants from burning tobacco when smoking cigarettes.
- Vaping also provides many of the behavioural and social aspects of smoking, which can be barriers to smoking cessation.
- Nicotine vaping may not eliminate all nicotine withdrawal symptoms, compared to smoking cigarettes. Communicate to your client that you can help them with ways to minimise nicotine withdrawal symptoms, such as finding an appropriate e-liquid nicotine strength.
- Nicotine vaping can help people stop smoking even when they do not intend or want to stop smoking (Cobb et al 2021; Kasza et al 2022; Lindson et al 2024).

### **Vaping is not harmless.**

- Since vaping is not harmless, people who smoke should try to stop smoking using current evidence-based approaches as first-line therapy (NRT or non-NRT medications in combination with behavioural support and by best practice guidelines) (Ministry of Health 2021a).

- If people who smoke cannot stop smoking using current evidence-based approaches, they can try nicotine vaping to stop smoking.

**Dual use is not advised.**

- Dual use (using vapes and cigarettes interchangeably) is not advised because most of the harms of smoking remain, even with a few cigarettes.
- If possible, clients should stop smoking entirely and switch to nicotine vaping.

**There is a risk of relapse back to smoking.**

- There is a risk of relapse back to smoking for people who have stopped smoking using vapes, including after they stop smoking and are exclusively vaping and when they make a stop-vaping attempt.
- Once relapse back to smoking tobacco is not so much of a concern, clients should ideally stop vaping, usually after 12 weeks of vaping with cessation support.

**The end goal is to stop smoking AND vaping.**

- Advise clients that the end goal is to be smokefree and vape free.
- Emphasise the importance of support from a Smokefree Service provider or Quitline when clients are stopping vaping.



## Cessation support

### Vaping Cessation

Use this section if you are a Smokefree Service provider or a health worker with time and expertise to provide further behavioural stop-smoking support using vapes as part of the 'Cessation' step of the ABC pathway.

There is currently no agreement on a recommended approach to support people vaping to stop smoking. The evidence is unclear on whether gradual or abrupt smoking cessation is more effective when using vaping to stop smoking. Taking a person-centred approach by providing information to help clients make an informed decision is an essential first step.

#### Key Points:

**Offer behavioural stop-smoking support using vapes.** 'It sounds like you have tried stop-smoking medication before and would now like to try vapes to stop smoking. I can refer you to (or provide) free, flexible, and effective services to help you stop smoking in this way - how does that sound?'

**Explore reasons for stopping smoking.** 'What are the good and not so good things about smoking?'

**Explore the importance of stopping smoking.** 'On a scale of 1 to 10, where one is not at all important and 10 is extremely important, how important is it for you to stop smoking now?'

**Support using vaping to stop smoking.**

**Arrange follow-up.** Offer ongoing support and decide timeframes for follow-up.

## **Offer behavioural stop-smoking support using vapes.**

- Offer nicotine-containing vapes, with or without nicotine-free vapes, to support smoking cessation in people who smoke cigarettes and who:
  - have tried stop-smoking medication with behavioural support
  - show interest in using vaping to stop smoking.
- Check if your client used stop-smoking medication correctly; if not, consider a re-trial.
- Refer to *The New Zealand Guidelines for Helping People to Stop Smoking: 2021 Update* for information on stop-smoking medications.
- If a discussion about stopping smoking has occurred, consider personalising and framing the offer with a reflection of the clients' reasons or goals for stopping: 'It sounds like you have tried stop-smoking medication before and would now like to try vaping to stop smoking. I can refer you to (or provide) free, flexible, and effective services to help you stop smoking in this way– how does that sound?'

## **Explore reasons for stopping smoking.**

- Explore the advantages and disadvantages of smoking:
  - 'What are the good and not so good things about smoking?'
  - 'What are the best and worst outcomes of stopping smoking?'
  - 'What are the benefits and costs of stopping smoking?'
- Explore your client's future goals and life satisfaction and how continuing smoking may affect these goals.

- Use the identified reasons to encourage your client to stay focused when facing cravings or withdrawal symptoms.

### **Explore the importance of stopping smoking.**

- Ask how important stopping smoking is at the moment: ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, where one is not at all important, and 10 is extremely important, how important is it for you to stop vaping now?’
- If low importance: explore and increase the importance of stopping, for example: ‘What would it take to make it more important for you to stop smoking?’
- If high importance but low confidence, explore barriers and previous successes to increase confidence, for example:  
*‘What do you see as the barriers to your quit attempt?’*  
*‘What successes have you had with past quit attempts?’*  
*‘What helped you to be successful then?’*
- If high importance and high confidence, strengthen the commitment to stop by asking the main reasons for stopping and emphasising the positive changes in the lives of your client and their family.

### **Support using vaping to stop smoking.**

- Agree on a date to stop smoking outside of periods of exceptional stress. Discuss healthy ways to manage stress levels in preparation for the quit.
- Recommend closed devices with sealed and prefilled pods for new vapers. These pods are easy to use, avoid contact with nicotine, and do not allow people to add other substances to the e-liquid.

- Advise clients to vape to relieve urges to smoke and withdrawal symptoms by taking 10 to 12 long, slow puffs of approximately three to four seconds each (Mendelsohn and Beaumont 2022). They may also take one or two puffs when needed to relieve cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- Tell clients that cough and mouth or throat irritation are the commonest side effects of vaping and typically settle over time (Mendelsohn and Beaumont 2022).
- Strongly encourage clients to set their own rules and boundaries early in the stop-smoking attempt about when, where, and how much vaping occurs. Setting rules is critical to help prevent bad vaping habits from forming, which may hinder efforts to stop vaping later. Examples of personal rules and boundaries include no vaping in certain places, including where it is prohibited, and no vaping in certain situations, such as after meals, with hot drinks, and when socialising.
- Acknowledge that a person's self-perception in relation to smoking and vaping plays an important role in their decision to stop smoking. For people who want to stop smoking or stay smokefree, it may help them to know that they can change their identity from that of a smoker to a vaper.
- Ensure clients are aware that vaping to stop smoking requires ongoing persistence to resist physical and social smoking cues. Vaping may mimic smoking but may not be a complete replication of the smoking experience (Fredericksen et al 2023; Robertson et al 2023).

## **Arrange follow-up.**

- Offer ongoing support and decide follow-up timeframes to re-evaluate treatment plans.
- Proactively contact your client when they reach 12 weeks smokefree.
- In smoking cessation, people typically use vapes over a longer time period than most smoking cessation medications (Ministry of Health 2021a), so the follow-up duration may exceed 12 weeks.
- People who used vaping to stop smoking usually feel confident that they can stop vaping without relapsing back to smoking cigarettes within three to six months after stopping smoking (Mendelsohn and Beaumont 2022).

## ***Smokefree Service and other contacts***

Use this link to help your client or patient find a nearby Smokefree Service and information about accessing Quitline:

<https://smokefree.org.nz/help-advice/stop-smoking-services>

### ***Quitline***

Quitline is a 24/7 service. Quit Advisors work with clients to make a plan to stop smoking or vaping. Your client or patient can call Quitline free on 0800 778 778 or text 4006.

### ***Reporting suspected adverse events***

Accurate information about vaping relies on reporting by clinicians and clients of suspected adverse events related to vaping. Anyone who suspects that a vaping product has caused harm should report it to the Vaping Regulatory Authority via HARP (Health Advisory and Regulatory Platform):

<https://vaping.harp.health.nz/submissions/new>