

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

FACT SHEET 5 OF 6:

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

- [Cessation support by health professionals](#)
- [Smokefree Service providers](#)
- [Medical practitioners in primary care and inpatient settings](#)
- [Dental and oral health practitioners](#)
- [Nursing, allied, and other health workers](#)

Cessation support by health professionals

Use this section:

- to complement the ABC pathway for vaping cessation, according to your health care worker role ('C' - Cessation)
- for clarification on pharmacological support for stopping vaping.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy and other medications

- Nicotine replacement therapy and other non-NRT medications, such as varenicline and bupropion, are not approved for vaping cessation. There is currently insufficient evidence for the use of NRT and non-NRT medications for vaping cessation (Kundu et al 2023), and Medsafe has not endorsed either for vaping cessation in New Zealand.
- Authorised prescribers, who are registered practitioners such as medical doctors and dentists, may legally prescribe medications under off-label use provisions for vaping cessation. Section 25 of the Medicines Act permits off-label prescribing when an authorised practitioner prescribes a treatment for a condition it is not approved to treat (BPAC 2021). However, Smokefree Service providers in New Zealand are not prescribers and cannot issue nor recommend NRT for the off-label indication of vaping cessation. Currently, they can only provide behavioural strategies for vaping cessation support.

Smokefree Service providers

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

If a client mentions using NRT as part of their wider stop-vaping programme:

- tell your clients that you are not able to issue NRT for vaping cessation:

‘Currently, NRT is not approved for vaping cessation by New Zealand’s medicines safety authority, Medsafe, because there is not enough evidence to support using NRT to stop vaping. I cannot issue you NRT to take home as a stop-vaping medication. As more research is done, NRT may be approved to stop vaping in New Zealand in the future. In the meantime, I can support you to stop vaping using other helpful strategies.’

- explain that authorised prescribers such as doctors and dentists can prescribe NRT to stop vaping on an off-label basis, which means they are prescribing it for a purpose that is outside the approved uses of NRT.

Alternatively, if a client wishes, they can purchase NRT from places such as supermarkets and pharmacies over the counter for the normal retail price.

Non-Nicotine Replacement Therapy medications

If a client mentions using non-NRT medications as part of their wider stop-vaping programme, tell your clients:

‘Currently, non-NRT medications are not approved for vaping cessation by New Zealand’s medicines safety authority, Medsafe, because there is not enough evidence to support using non-NRT medications to stop vaping. As more research is done, non-NRT medications may be approved to stop vaping in New Zealand in the future. In the meantime, I can support you to stop vaping using other helpful strategies.’

Medical practitioners in primary care and inpatient settings

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Medical practitioners should advise patients that medication options are based on tobacco cessation treatment approaches and that NRT or other medications for vaping cessation are considered off-label indications. It may be helpful to liaise with the patient's Smokefree Service provider if there is cause to consider medications for vaping cessation. If the patient has not seen a Smokefree Service provider for vaping cessation support, consider making a referral.

Adjusting medication dosing when tobacco smoking changes

Any change to the amount of tobacco smoked leads to changes in drug metabolism and the potential for adverse drug effects (NSW Ministry of Health 2019). The components of tobacco smoke, not nicotine, cause the drug metabolism changes. Neither the use of NRT nor the use of nicotine vapes affects drug metabolism. It is when people who smoke begin stopping or changing the amount of tobacco smoked that the resulting changes to drug metabolism may necessitate changes to medication dosing under medical supervision^[3].

^[3]A complete list of drug interactions can be found here:
www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/drug-smoking-cessation.aspx

Take a vaping history in all patients

- Medical practitioners in primary care and inpatient settings should ask for and record the vaping status of all patients, along with their smoking status.
- Incorporate questions about vaping when evaluating patients, including young people, who present with respiratory symptoms or distress (Brown and Balk 2020).

Dental and oral health practitioners

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Authorised prescribers include registered dentists. Advise patients that medication options are based on tobacco cessation treatment approaches and that NRT or other medications for vaping cessation are considered off-label indications. Refer to your scope of practice and the approved list of prescription medicines relevant to your practice to find out what you can prescribe under off-label use provisions for vaping cessation. It may be helpful to liaise with the patient's Smokefree Service provider if there is cause to consider medications for vaping cessation. If the patient has not seen a Smokefree Service provider for vaping cessation support, consider making a referral.

Take a vaping history in all patients

Dental and oral health practitioners should ask about and record the vaping status of all patients, irrespective of whether there has been training on providing vaping cessation (Z. Ahmed et al 2018; Sundstrom et al 2023). Vaping status can be documented as part of routine oral history screening in the same way as asking about tobacco and alcohol use, to enable management of any oral health effects associated with vaping (Irusa et al 2022).

Nursing, allied, and other health workers

Nicotine replacement therapy

Refer to your scope of practice and the approved list of prescription medicines relevant to your role to determine whether you can prescribe medications under off-label use provisions for vaping cessation. Authorised prescribers have independent prescribing rights within their scope of practice and include nurse practitioners, optometrists, dentists, and registered midwives (Key and Hoare 2020; Medsafe 2020). Designated prescribers may only prescribe from a list of medicines published by the Director- General of Health under section 105(5A) of the Medicines Act and are expected to prescribe collaboratively alongside an authorised prescriber. Designated prescribers include pharmacist, dietitian, and registered nurse prescribers (Key and Hoare 2020).

It may be helpful to liaise with the patient's Smokefree Service provider if there is cause to consider medications for vaping cessation. If the patient has not seen a Smokefree Service provider for vaping cessation support, consider making a referral.