

Vaping and Substance Use

There has been a rapid increase nationally in the use of vapes amongst young people. This has led to an increased risk of physical/mental health consequences and an increase in the number of young people becoming addicted to the use of vapes. This has resulted in the government putting restrictions in, to combat this issue.



The Law

- Vapes are legal but restricted. This means they cannot be sold to anyone under the age of 18.
- Disposable vapes with more than 600 puffs are illegal in the UK.
- You may see vapes with 30mg and 50mg nicotine levels being sold, but these are illegal as they are above the 20mg limit and can cause serious health issues.



Respect



Resilience



Responsibility



Five facts about vaping

- 1.** If you are underage, or you are buying vapes with a nicotine level of more than 20mg or with more than 600 puffs, these vapes are illegal and unregulated. This means they may be contaminated with other ingredients or have unsafe heating elements.
- 2.** At the moment, many manufacturers try to make vapes appealing to young people. Packets are often brightly coloured and can show cartoon pictures. Many flavours are named after fizzy drinks, sweets or ice-cream. The government wants to change this.
- 3.** Nicotine is addictive. People can become physically or psychologically dependent on it. This means your body or your mind keep telling you that you need to vape.
- 4.** Nicotine can make anxiety and depression worse. It also affects memory, concentration, self-control, and attention, especially in developing brains.
- 5.** Vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it's still not safe. It can cause side effects like throat and mouth irritation, headache, cough, feeling sick or dental problems. We don't know yet what long-term effects it has.



THC Vaping

There has been an increase in young people using vapes and experimenting with THC vaping. THC is the chemical that gives the 'high' effect in cannabis.

THC is a chemical substance in the cannabis plant that causes you to get high. It stands for tetrahydrocannabinol, which is a type of cannabinoid.

THC affects everyone differently, but due to its chemical makeup, the high from smoking THC is often more intense than from smoking cannabis. The latest reports show that this has led to some young people overdosing on THC, causing them to become unwell and need medical attention.

Is THC legal?

Like cannabis, THC is a Class B drug. It is illegal to buy or sell it in the UK without a prescription. You can be arrested and charged for having THC oil in your possession. You could get an unlimited fine, be sentenced to up to five years in prison, or both. If you give THC to someone else, you could get up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

The risks of vaping can affect both the physical and mental health of a young person.

Risks

- You may become dependent on nicotine and feel unable to control your vape use.
- Vaping when you are under 18 means you can't get hold of vapes legally. There will not be proper safety checks on illegal vapes or on places and people selling them. Vapes purchased this way could be contaminated. People supplying vapes to young people could be trying to groom and exploit them.
- Some people have tried vaping other substances such as THC, the active ingredient in cannabis. This can be dangerous as you do not know 100% what the substance is or how strong it is.

The risks of cannabis vaping

There are multiple unpleasant side effects to vaping THC. For example:

It can irritate your airways and cause coughing and wheezing.

It can cause your blood pressure to drop.

It can increase your risk of lung and mouth cancers.

You can get cravings and withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms include feeling irritable and sick, trouble with your sleep and diet, sweating, shaking and diarrhoea.

Talking to a young person about Cannabis/ THC Vapes

Context

Some young people in our area have become unwell after vaping. They thought the vape liquid had THC (a drug found in cannabis), but it contained a more **harmful synthetic drug** known as **Spice**.

We want to help you talk to your child about this. Knowing the risks can help keep them safe.

What is Spice?

Spice is a man-made drug, made using chemicals - it is known as a Synthetic Cannabinoid. **synthetic Cannabinoids** are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. It is not real cannabis, but it tries to mimic the desired effects of cannabis. Spice is much stronger than cannabis and produces more frequent negative side effects.

Why is Spice Risky?

- It can make people feel very anxious or worsen mental health problems.
- It can cause bad side effects that may need hospital treatment.
- People who use Spice often can become addicted and feel sick when they stop.

Vaping Products

Some vaping products say they have cannabis or THC in them. These are illegal drugs called Class B drugs.

Because they are illegal:

- No one checks what's inside them.
- They can be very strong and dangerous.
- They might even contain Spice, which is harmful.



These products can be bought online or through encrypted messaging apps like Telegram or Snapchat.

The best way to avoid any risk of harm is to **avoid using illicit vaping products**.

Please note that Consumer CBD (cannabidiol) products derived from cannabis are legal. These are sold for their potential to produce 'wellbeing' benefits, including reducing anxiety and relieving pain.

Overdose

Spice strength can vary a lot, which makes it easy to take too much by accident.

People might not know what drug they've taken. That's why it's best to treat the person's symptoms, not just the drug. If you think someone has taken too much Spice, **call an ambulance immediately**.

General symptoms include:

- Loss of consciousness
- Breathing difficulties
- **Seizures**
- High temperature (more than 38.5°C)
- Severe chest pains
- Vomiting

Spice overdoses have been known to cause Serotonin Syndrome, where symptoms can also include:

- Twitching or jerking movements
- Fully dilated pupils
- Shivering

Top Tips for Speaking to Young People about Drugs

- It helps to **be as factual as possible**. This makes your message more credible and makes sense to the young person.
- Try to speak with care and kindness. Let the young person know you want them to be safe and well and to have safe space for discussion.
- Listen to the young person **so they feel heard**, it can help you both feel calmer and open to talking and be reassuring to you.
- Talk to Frank has some more advice on how to talk to your child www.talktofrank.com

Remember:

- Most young people do not vape.
- Young people in your care may not be interested in cannabis-based vape products.
- Most young people who have tried vaping have only used nicotine-based or flavoured nicotine-free vape products (it is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under 18).
- Only a small number of young people who vape use cannabis / THC products.

THC can affect your mental health.

THC can affect your mood and emotional wellbeing in many ways, especially if you are taking a lot of it. It can contribute to:

- Memory and concentration problems.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Depression.
- Anxiety, paranoia, confusion and panic attacks.
- Making psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia worse, or leading to new ones



How Do I Know My Child is Vaping THC?

Vaping THC will have similar effects to using cannabis. Vaping THC as opposed to smoking cannabis allows a larger amount of THC to be inhaled very quickly, potentially causing overdosing. The effects of vaping THC depends on the amount of THC/CBD in the vape, your child's mood, the environment and how often it is used. The short-term effects are listed below and can be signs your child has vaped THC oil.



Will my child get in trouble for using THC Vapes?

Cannabis is an illegal Class B drug. There are consequences for the illegal possession, supply and production of cannabis.

Possession – having (possessing) cannabis in any form including edibles can get you up to 5 years in prison, unlimited fine or both.

Supply - supplying cannabis which includes giving it to your friends for free or sharing it with them can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. Dealing - selling cannabis for any sized financial gain can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Trafficking - moving it around the country on transport or through private vehicle etc. can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Production - producing cannabis whether growing for self-consumption or to be sold can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. Young people who use cannabis are at increased risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE), and to be groomed into County Lines operations, see below for more information.



How To Talk To Your Child About Vaping

- Find a suitable time to start a conversation. It might be as you walk past a vape shop or see someone using a vape.
- Ask your child what they know about vaping. You can ask them if they know of people who use them and why they use them. You might ask them if they have ever tried it.
- Listen to your child, their experience, and their point of view. Show you are interested in what they have to say.
- Then you can gently and calmly give them some facts about vaping. Ask them what they think about the facts.
- If your child is already using a vape, then have the same conversation with them and ask them what they like about it. You are not saying it's okay for them to do it by being interested. You can still be clear about how you feel.
- If they feel pressured into vaping by friends, you can teach them helpful skills of being confident in saying 'no thanks, it's not for me.'

How to keep your child safe

- Have regular, healthy communication with your child (see above)
- Listen to their voice – it is important they feel heard
- Check your child's mobile phone device regularly – organised crime gangs will often use social media apps like Snapchat to advertise and message the selling of THC and Spice
- Monitor your child's whereabouts – a popular location for drug dealers to sell THC/Spice to young people is in public places like train stations.
- Talk about who they are meeting, where they are going – build trust through communication and honesty.
- Set clear boundaries for your child.
- Share with them information from this newsletter about the impact vaping and THC can have.




If you believe your child is using THC/illegal substances

Support your child to:

Book an appointment with the GP. Share your concerns and explain the detrimental impact this is having on your child.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to support your child. In the first instance, speak to members of staff at school who already work with your child.

Below are national services you can also access to find more information and support:

- Childline - 0800 1111 
- Frank - talktofrank.com 0300 123 6600
frank@talktofrank.com text - 82111 
- Young Minds - youngminds.org.uk 