

Update on use of Tobacco and Vaping

January 2025

Smoking continues to be the number one preventable cause of death, disability and ill health in the UK, claiming the lives of around 80,000 people a year.^{1,2} Smoking costs the economy and wider society £21.3 billion a year in England.³ This includes an annual £18.0 billion loss to productivity, through smoking related lost earnings, unemployment and early death, as well as costs to the NHS and social care of £2.96 billion.

While nicotine vapes can play an important role in helping adult smokers to quit, selling nicotine vapes to under 18s is illegal. Due to nicotine content and the unknown long-term harms, vaping and nicotine products carry risk of harm and addiction.

The government has pledged to create a Smoke-free UK⁴ to reduce these impacts on people, society and the health and social care system.

This document summarises the recent changes in legislation and signposts to the relevant evidence to guide oral health professionals with supporting this pledge.

1. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2024

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 5th November 2024 and is currently progressing through the stages required for legislation. The Bill aims to create a smoke-free generation, extend smoke-free places, reduce youth vaping and strengthen enforcement of these measures.

Government will be given powers to extend the indoor smoking ban to certain outdoor settings, focused on protecting children and the most vulnerable. This comes at the same time that the government has announced plans to create a "smokefree generation", setting out measures to prevent smoking at an early age through banning the sale of tobacco to those born on or after 1st January 2009. Sale of tobacco to anyone under the age of 18 years is already illegal.⁵

The Bill also aims to stop non-smokers from taking up vaping through banning vape advertising and sponsorship. New powers will be created to restrict the flavours, display and packaging of all types of vapes aimed at reducing the desirability of these products. Combined with on-the-spot fines, tougher action on enforcement and tighter regulation on vaping, the Bill will protect children and young people from harm and addiction.

1 Office of National Statistics. Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2023. London: ONS; 1 October 2024

2 Statistics on Public Health, England 2023, NHS Digital, 17 Dec 2024

3 ASH Action on Smoking and Health, January 2025, <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-ready-reckoner>

4 [Smoking ban introduced to protect children and most vulnerable - GOV.UK](#)

5 [The Nicotine Inhaling Products \(Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing\) Regulations 2015](#)

More information:

[Announcement](#)

[Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#)

[Tobacco and Vapes Bill: factsheet](#)

[Partner Communications Toolkit for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#)

2. Information on Smoking and Tobacco use

Sale of tobacco to anyone under the age of 18 years is illegal.

Tobacco use, including both smoked and smokeless tobacco, seriously affects oral health as well as general health. Smoking causes at least 16 different types of cancer so stopping smoking completely is the best thing people can do for their health.⁶ The most significant risk to oral health is developing oral cancer and pre-cancer. It is also the most common risk factor for periodontal disease.

Smoking increases the risk of oral cancer by 5 times.⁶ The risk increases to 10-fold when combined with alcohol consumption.⁷

3. Information on use of Vaping products

Vapes or e-cigarettes heat a liquid that becomes a vapour people can breathe in. They usually contain nicotine, which although does not cause cancer, is the addictive chemical in cigarettes. E-cigarettes do not contain tobacco, which is the harmful part of cigarettes that causes cancer.⁸

Research so far shows that legal e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking. While vapes contain the same addictive substance as cigarettes, vaping nicotine is far less harmful. But e-cigarettes are not risk-free. They can cause side effects such as throat and mouth irritation, headache, cough and feeling sick. These side effects tend to reduce over time with continued use. We don't know yet what effects they might have in the long term. There is no evidence to date that vaping is harmful to people around vapers. Vapes can be an effective quit aid, however, vaping is never recommended for children and carries a significant risk.⁹ In the UK, nicotine vaping products are tightly regulated for safety and quality and the sale of vapes to anyone under the age of 18years is illegal.

6 Sadri G, Mahjub H. Tobacco smoking and oral cancer: a meta-analysis. *J Res Health Sci.* 2007;7(1):18–23.

7 Hashibe M, Brennan P, Chuang SC, Boccia S, Castellsague X, Chen C, and others. Interaction between tobacco and alcohol use and the risk of head and neck cancer: pooled analysis in the International Head and Neck Cancer Epidemiology Consortium. *Cancer epidemiology, biomarkers and prevention: a publication of the American Association for Cancer Research, cosponsored by the American Society of Preventive Oncology.* 2009;18(2):541-50.

8 [Is vaping harmful? | Vaping side effects | Cancer Research UK](#)

9 NICE. Stop smoking interventions and services [NG92]. London: NICE; 2018 28.03.2018. Contract No.: NG92

4. Information on use of Chewing Tobacco and other Tobacco products

Tobacco comes in many different forms and all forms of tobacco can harm your health – there is no safe way to use tobacco.¹⁰ Smoking bidi (thin cigarettes of tobacco wrapped in brown tendu leaf) or shisha (also known as waterpipe or hookah) also increases risk of cancer, heart disease and respiratory problems.¹¹ Like cigarettes, these products contain significant levels of cancer-causing chemicals. Smoking shisha is not safer than smoking cigarettes – it can double the risk of developing lung cancer.

Tobacco that you do not smoke (including paan, betel quid, gutkha and chewing tobacco) is not a 'safe' way to use tobacco. It causes cancer and can be as addictive as smoking. Using smokeless tobacco raises the risk of mouth cancer and oesophageal cancer. Chewing smokeless tobacco is popular with many people from south Asian communities, and studies have found that chewing betel quid without tobacco is still harmful.

5. Smoking cessation services

Dental teams across primary care, community and hospital services routinely investigate tobacco use as part of standard patient care. People who use tobacco should receive advice to stop and be offered support to do so with a referral to their local stop smoking service. Expert support from local stop smoking providers, combined with the use of stop smoking aids gives smokers the best chance of quitting for good.

Dental team members should find out what specialist stop smoking services (ideally local stop smoking support) are available locally for their patients. See link below.

[Find your local Stop Smoking Service \(LSSS\) - Better Health - NHS](#)

Where none is available then patients should be directed towards their GP or pharmacist.

¹⁰ <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/smoking-and-cancer/shisha-chewing-tobacco-betel-paan-and-other-tobacco>

¹¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/paan-bidi-and-shisha-risks/>

Further reading and resources

Delivering Better Oral Health (DBOH) Toolkit

Chapter 11 provides evidence-based guidance on smoking and tobacco advice for the dental team, with the 'overall goal of the dental team is to help eliminate all forms of tobacco use'. See the link below.

[Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention](#)

Effective interventions to support patients to quit smoking, including Very Brief Advice, are discussed in Chapter 11.

[Chapter 11: Smoking and tobacco use](#)

National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training – Dental Patient Factsheet

[Dental patient factsheet](#)

NICE guidance NG209

This guideline covers support to stop smoking for everyone aged 12 and over and help to reduce people's harm from smoking if they are not ready to stop in one go. It also covers ways to prevent children, young people and young adults aged 24 and under from taking up smoking. The guideline brings together and updates all NICE's previous guidelines on using tobacco, including smokeless tobacco. It covers nicotine replacement therapy and e-cigarettes to help people stop smoking or reduce their harm from smoking.

[Overview | Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence | Guidance | NICE](#) or <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng209>

Statistics on smoking and vaping

Smoking, UK

Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2023. London: ONS; 2020 1 October 2024

E-cigarette use, Great Britain

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/drugusealcoholandsmoking/datasets/ecigaretteuseingreatbritain>

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