



TO: All Principals, for sharing with parents, guardians and staff
FROM: Martina Blake & Dr. Paul Kavanagh, HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
RE: Nicotine pouch (snus) use & Vaping among children and young people
DATE: 8 October 2025

E-cigarettes (vapes) and nicotine pouches (snus) pose growing risks to the health of children and young people.

This message from the HSE is to help you understand these risks, and provide you with links to further information and resources that will help protect your child's health in the short and long term.

We would encourage principles or parent teacher associations to order our resources, which are available free of charge from www.healthpromotion.ie and distribute them in your school community.

Trends in smoking, vaping and nicotine pouch use among children and young people

Smoking among 10 to 17 year olds has decreased from almost 1 in 4 in 1998 to 1 in 21 in 2022. This is a huge achievement that would not have been possible without the support of parents, guardians, teachers and schools.

Vaping (e-cigarettes) and nicotine pouches (snus) are a new health risk. Most young people don't vape or use nicotine pouches, but the use of these products among young people is increasing. A recent study of 15 and 16 year olds found:

- 1 in 3 had tried vapes
- 1 in 6 were current users of vapes
- 1 in 13 had tried nicotine pouches (snus).

There is extensive marketing and promotion of vapes (e-cigarettes) and nicotine pouches (snus). New products like disposable vapes and use of synthetic nicotine salts may be making it easier for children to get addicted to nicotine.



Why nicotine is harmful to children and young people

Nicotine can harm children and young people in many ways.

- **Addiction and dependence:** The nicotine in vapes (e-cigarettes) and nicotine pouches (snus) is highly addictive and can be in very high doses.
- **Impact on the brain and emotional wellbeing:** Developing brains are more vulnerable to the effects of nicotine. This can cause problems with attention and learning, mood disorders, sleep issues, anxiety and depression. It can also mean that young people are more impulsive.
- **Exposure to other drugs:** Some vapes (e-cigarettes) can contain alcohol or synthetic cannabinoids. These were banned in July 2025.
- **Heart and lung damage:** Early research shows vaping can damage the heart and cause asthma attacks and lung injuries.
- **Injuries:** Vaping has been linked to injuries and health problems like poisonings, burns from batteries and fractures, but these are less common.
- **Cigarette or tobacco smoking:** Young people who vape are more likely to start smoking tobacco and cigarettes.

Vaping and nicotine pouch (snus) use is still relatively new. It may be years before we know all the long-term effects.

What is being done to protect children and young people

It is now illegal to sell e-cigarettes (vapes) to children under 18, but nicotine pouches (snus) are still legal to sell and advertise. New laws are being prepared to:

- restrict vape (e-cigarette) flavours
- limit packaging and advertising
- ban disposable vapes.

These laws are expected to be in place soon.

Parents, guardians and teachers have asked for advice on how they can help to protect children and young people from vaping.

**Schools can help by:**

- including vaping (e-cigarettes) and nicotine pouches (snus) in substance misuse policies
- using the updated HSE Education Programme resources on e-cigarettes (vapes) and nicotine pouches (snus). Links are provided at the end of this document.

Parents and guardians can help to protect children and young people by:

- talking to your child about the risks of vaping (e-cigarettes) and nicotine pouches (snus). There's advice on [talking to your child about nicotine and vaping](#) on the HSE website, depending on their age.
- knowing the signs of vape use and what to do if you think or know your child is vaping. There's advice on [signs of vape use](#) on the HSE website.

HSE Links to information and resources:

[Vaping and Young people](#)

[Smokeless nicotine and tobacco products](#)

[How to quit vaping](#)

[Talking to your child about nicotine and vaping](#)

[E cigarette resources](#)

[Order hard copy resources](#)

A 'QUIT4Youth' resource has been developed for HSE services to help them support young people who smoke and use e-cigarettes. A vaping and snus prevention campaign is also being prepared currently and will be launched in the coming weeks.

We are keeping this situation with vaping and nicotine pouches under close review. We thank parents, guardians, schools and everyone who is working with us to respond to this problem. Through our work together, we can help keep children safe from harm and support them to have the best start in life.

Yours sincerely,

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