

1 October 2024

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Tēnā koe

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00064219

Thank you for your email on 8 September 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *What is the scientific basis for the following statements on the Health NZ website.*
 - a) *“Using a vape can help smokers quit as it is much less harmful than smoking cigarettes.”*
 - b) *“Vaping is not harmless but it is much less harmful than smoking.”*
 - c) *“Vaping enables people to get nicotine without the toxins produced by burning tobacco.”*
 - d) *“Vaping can help some people quit smoking.”*
 - e) *“Vaping is not harmless, but it is much less harmful than smoking.”*
 - f) *“Vaping is less harmful to those around you than smoking, as there’s no current evidence that second-hand vapour is dangerous to others.”*
 - g) *“A vape device heats a liquid (often containing nicotine) to produce an aerosol (or a vapour) that can be inhaled. The vapour delivers nicotine to the user in a way that is relatively free of other chemicals.”*

Please cite the independent scientific studies (not sponsored by the Tobacco industry) and statistics used by Health NZ to formulate these statements.

2. *Does Health NZ stand by the following statements on the Health NZ website:*
 - a) *“It is not possible to say from current evidence that vaping causes people to smoke.”*
 - b) *“There is no evidence that vaping is normalising smoking.”*
 - c) *“In New Zealand youth smoking rates continue to decline and daily use of vaping devices is rare and is largely confined to those who have smoked.”*
 - d) *“There is no evidence yet that second-hand vapour is dangerous to others, however it is best to not vape around children.”*

Please cite the independent scientific studies (not sponsored by the Tobacco industry) and statistics used by Health NZ to formulate these statements.

3. *Is Health NZ still confident to promote vaping as a cessation tool, in particular with these statements on the Health NZ website:*
 - a) *“Vaping is different to smoking a cigarette; it is important to persevere with vaping as it may take time to work out what vaping style and e-liquid work best for you.*
 - b) *“Talk to the staff at specialist vape shops about the best way to vape when you’re trying to quit.*
 - c) *“You will probably need to experiment in order to find the right combination of device, e-liquid and nicotine strength that work for you.*
 - d) *“Don’t give up on vaping if at first it doesn’t work. It may take some experimentation with different products and e-liquids to find the right one.”*

Please cite the independent scientific studies (not sponsored by the Tobacco industry) and statistics that support these statements.

Please cite any independent scientific studies (not sponsored by the Tobacco industry) that provide evidence to Health NZ that vaping is an effective smoking cessation tool.

Response

Thank you for bringing the Health NZ Whanganui vaping webpage to our attention. We recognise that some of the content on this website had not been updated, and that this may have caused confusion amongst the public. Please be advised that Health NZ has redirected the webpages to the Vaping Facts website, with the aim to have nationally consistent and up-to-date information across all former District Health Board websites.

The Vaping Facts website was launched in 2019 by Health Promotion Agency (now Health Promotion within Health NZ) to provide credible information about vaping as a way to stop smoking. This is Health NZ's primary website about vaping as a tool for smoking cessation (an associated brochure was also developed).

A Foundational Messages document was produced that same year to assist with consistency of public health messaging around vaping as a way to stop smoking, and formed the messaging for the Vaping Facts website. This was intended to be a resource for those creating public-facing information.

Messages in this original document were approved by the Ministry of Health and collated from a range of sources, including:

- Ministry of Health position statement and key messages on vaping products.
- Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database Systematic Review, 2016.
- National Centre for Smoking and Cessation Training (NCSCT) online training.
- Smokefree Action Coalition (UK) website and resources.
- House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report on e-cigarettes. 17 August 2018.
- Cancer Research UK website and resources.
- ASH Year 10 Snapshot survey.
- Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018.

The Vaping Facts website and brochure are reviewed and updated on a regular basis and are currently under review. The 2024 Cochrane Database Systematic Review, found here: www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD010216.pub8/full supports the statements on the Vaping Facts website and brochure, including but not limited to the following:

- Vaping can help some people quit smoking
- Vaping is not harmless, but less harmful than smoking
- The difference between smoking and vaping is that smoking delivers nicotine by burning tobacco, which can cause smoking-related illnesses. Vaping delivers nicotine in a much less harmful way by heating a liquid. While nicotine is addictive, it doesn't cause cancer.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Sara Freitag

**Manager, Machinery of Government Support
National Public Health Service**