

Priority Issues Paper - Vaping

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Vaping poses a serious risk to the health of the community, according to a new priority issues paper released by Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN).

The paper highlights the side-effects of vaping which include seizures and poisoning in some users, and an impact on heart and lungs from chemicals, some of which can even cause cancer.

Vaping exposes users to heavy metals and fine particulate matter (also found in air pollution from traffic and bushfires) while short term impacts may include coughing, breathing problems, vomiting, swelling and throat irritation.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the new priority issues paper highlighted the dangers of vaping, revealing concerning statistics that showed an increase in vaping in 2022 with 22 per cent of Victorian adults declaring they had vaped. This is up from 17 per cent in 2018-2019.

Of these, 6.1 per cent are current users, up from 3 per cent in 2018-2019 and 3.5 per cent are regular users, up from 1.6 per cent.

“It is very concerning that the largest increase in vaping is among young people under 30 years of age,” Ms Proposch said.

The paper reveals that 19.4% of males 18-24 years vaped in 2022 (up from 10.8% in 2018-19) and 15.2% of females 18-24 years (2.8%).

An Australian school staff survey indicated 78% are concerned about vaping in primary and secondary schools.

“E-cigarettes present a very real danger to our community – especially for children and young adults,” Ms Proposch said. “If we want people to live longer, healthier lives, we need to address the issue of vaping.”

Other concerning facts in the priority issues papers include:

- Students who vape report poor mental health, social interactions and school/sport performance;
- Vapes generally contain much more nicotine than cigarettes;
- Young people who vape are more likely to smoke tobacco cigarettes later;
- Vapes containing nicotine can be bought in some Gippsland shops under the counter or online;
- Vaping is harder to detect than smoking because there may be no odour or a sweet, fruity smell;
- Vapes are actively and illegally marketed to children and young people by the tobacco industry;
- A fruity or sweet flavour does not make vaping safe.

The priority issues paper suggests people who want to help address the issue should advocate for a ban on import and sales of vapes and products. They can also invite young people to contribute to design and delivery of local resources and services to help raise awareness in the community.

Read the priority issues paper on e-cigarettes and vaping at <https://gphn.org.au/resources/>

For more information, contact Tracy VanderZalm at Gippsland PHN on 0447 491 345.