

What is and what isn't a "disposable" vape?

Disposable vape devices, as known amongst the vaping community, are single-use devices that cannot be refilled or recharged. In various countries worldwide, there has been a push to ban disposable devices because of the issues with youth use and waste. This white paper will address all those concerns and more.

But first, a simple explanation of what is, and what is NOT, a disposable vape.

A truly disposable vape is a single-use vape (unibody, non-refillable, non-rechargeable). A device-liquid combination that is not intended to be separated, opened, and refilled by the end consumer.¹



A disposable vape is a closed system, but not all closed-system vapes are disposable.

Disposable vs. Closed System:

The difference between a disposable vape and a closed system vape is that the latter, in simple terms, is refillable, rechargeable and requires the end consumer to turn it on and off.



- A Pod Vape can be either a closed or an open system.
- A Pod vape has separate replaceable pods and/or an atomiser with replaceable coils with a battery unit that is rechargeable and can be used multiple times with replacement pods or the atomiser can be refilled with nicotine liquid.
- A pod vape can have an internal rechargeable battery, and some have removable batteries that can be charged externally or via a USB charging cord. Some have both options.

¹ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2016-10685.pdf>

Closed System vs. Open System:

The differences between closed systems and open system vapes are illustrated below:



Addressing issues and concerns:

The main concerns around disposable and “closed system vapes” are access and use by youth and environmental impact.

Youth Access:

Many concerns have been raised about the ease of access to disposable and closed system vapes by youth in general retailers as well as access to the “grey market” of friends and within social networks. The method to address this most effectively is public education and robust enforcement of existing regulations where they exist and the implementation of robust and pragmatic regulations in areas where there are none.

It was found in San Francisco, that when the ban on flavoured vaping was enacted, the youth vaping rate skyrocketed due to lack of regulation and enforcement (ie. black and gray markets).² It has also become apparent in Australia, where one can only access nicotine via a prescription, the rate of both youth vaping and smoking has risen incrementally for the first time in years.³ Along with this comes crime, such as the firebombing of tobacconists in Victoria and the gangs becoming involved in the distribution of tobacco and vape products.⁴

² <https://news.yale.edu/2021/05/25/ban-flavored-vaping-may-have-led-teens-cigarettes-study-suggests>

³

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/02/australia-teenage-smoking-rates-rise-for-first-time-in-25-years-research-reveals>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/22/earn-or-burn-the-firebombings-and-underworld-conflicts-exposing-australias-illicit-tobacco-trade>

Youth Vaping:

The concern over youth vaping has been widely overstated. First, in methodology, with some researchers equating ever use with daily use⁵. Secondly, youth vaping peaked in 2019, and has been steadily decreasing, population wise, since 2022⁶. Lastly, in the misinterpretation of the “Gateway Theory” which posits that youth who vape are more likely to smoke⁷, which has been disproven in multiple research studies.^{8,9}

Environmental Impact:

Without proper disposal pathways, vape waste can contribute to introducing plastic, nicotine salts, heavy metals, and flammable lithium-ion batteries into the environment, polluting the waterways, soil, and wildlife. This is a valid concern, which is already being addressed in some localities with recycling initiatives at point of sale.^{10,11}

What does effective regulation look like?

Currently, there is a trend amongst governments towards banning “disposable vapes” due to the issues of youth use/access and the environmental impacts of the devices. As noted above, these issues can, should and are being addressed by councils, manufacturers and retailers in multiple countries across the world with strict purchase age enforcement and recycling programmes - both with voluntary and legislated mandatory programmes.

With pragmatic regulation that addresses and enforces legislation, as well as educates the public on who vaping is for, and who it is not for, governments eliminate the need to push further restrictions on adults ability to make choices that help them to switch off the harmful products that impact their health and well being.

As a final note...

It should be noted that the ultimate disposable product that is not subject to bans and causes the most harm - **combustible tobacco** - remains legal on the consumer market and readily available and contributes to environmental harm, as well as the negative impacts to physical health.

In countries where there are bans and severe restrictions on the products, the grey and black markets rise to meet the demand. Increased crime, loss of revenue and loss of control to protect public health are the main outcomes from such policies.

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9018638/>

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2213219822005840>

⁷ <https://academic.oup.com/ntr/article/24/8/1315/6524737>

⁸ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2022/mar/e-cigarettes-not-substantial-gateway-smoking-young-people>

⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0955395920300530>

¹⁰ <https://www.superfy.com/vape-recycling-enterprises/>

¹¹ <https://www.vapecycle.co.nz/blog/vape-recycle-achievements>