

Six young people suffer seizures, loss of consciousness and vomiting after vaping

Six young people in NSW have been admitted to hospital after buying vapes on Snapchat.

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Vaping epidemic amongst children

Earlier this year a study published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health found a third of people under the age of 30 have used an e-cigarette, while 14% say they currently vape.

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Six young people have been admitted to hospital suffering seizures and loss of consciousness after vaping.

They all presented to NSW hospitals within days of each other after suffering seizures, loss of consciousness, and vomiting between June 21 and 29.

A NSW Health spokesperson confirmed that some of the vapes were purchased through the social media app, Snapchat and analysis of the vapes revealed they contained nicotine.

Most of the young people admitted themselves to hospitals in the South West Sydney Local Health District which includes Bankstown, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Wingecarribee and Wollondilly local government areas.



Six young people were admitted to emergency rooms within days of each other after vaping. Picture: Supplied

It is not the first time a young person has been admitted to hospital after vaping.

A Blue Mountains Grammar student hospitalised in June last year after suffering a seizure while vaping in the school toilets.

Under current legislation, vapes containing nicotine cannot be purchased without a prescription and are only legally sold in chemists.

However, young people have reported that it's easy to purchase the products through social media or over the counter at tobacconists and convenience stores.

NSW Health have taken the opportunity to remind parents that vaping is common among young people and it is important to have conversations with their children to discourage them from participating in it.

“NSW Health is increasingly concerned about the harmful health effects associated with vapes and continues to remind the community of the dangers associated with vaping, particularly for young people,” a spokesperson said.

“Vaping places young people at risk of lifelong serious health issues, including long-lasting effects of exposing their developing brains to nicotine, as many vapes have been found to contain high levels of nicotine even when they are not labelled as such.”

Vapes have been found to contain a dangerous cocktail of chemicals, including some of the same ingredients found in weedkiller and nail polish remover.

What to do if someone is suffering from nicotine poisoning?

If parents or carers are concerned someone has been poisoned by liquid nicotine, they should call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately.

If they have collapsed or are not breathing, immediately call triple-0 for an ambulance.

For support and advice about quitting vaping, parents or young people can contact their general practitioner or call Quitline on 13 78 48.

When Ryan was in college, he became curious about [vaping](#). At the time, it was a newer alternative to cigarettes, and it had become very popular among his friends. He kept seeing people at parties using vapes and thought he would give it a try. After all, he had heard it was better for you than smoking. Though his parents had talked to him about the dangers of vaping, like lung injury or popcorn lung, he didn't know anyone who had had any health problems associated with it, so he didn't worry about vaping regularly. "I had a very devil-may-care attitude because I felt invincible," he said.

Before he knew it, Ryan was addicted. He was vaping consistently through the day because, unlike cigarettes, he could sneakily vape whenever he wanted. But inside his lungs were changing. "It's very hard to know the damage you are doing to your lungs because you don't see them every day, It's not like a cut or something. And though you may feel small changes over time, they are easy to ignore or write off as a cold," he explained.

That is, until he ended up in the emergency room.

From Innocent to Deadly

One day, Ryan felt off and decided he needed to visit his primary care doctor, who treated him for an upper respiratory infection. The medication seemed to do nothing though, and Ryan found himself very short of breath in the middle of the night. He called his parents and asked them to meet him at the emergency room. There, the doctors did a chest X-ray that seemed clear, so he returned home.

But just two days later, Ryan was rushed back to the hospital in an ambulance. This time his lungs had 85% saturation and his breathing levels and heart rate were terrifyingly high. "His breathing rate was 62 breaths a minute and his heart rate was 160. In comparison, a normal breathing rate is around 12 breaths a minute, so he was really in a bad way," his mother recalled.

He was intubated and his doctors worked fast to help him breathe. This required them to put Ryan's ventilator on a pressure level of 20 (normal rate is 5) at 100% oxygen. This was so much higher than normal that doctors had an [ECMO machine](#) on standby in Ryan's room in case he had a heart attack, but they explained it was necessary to keep him breathing. Once they were able to lower these numbers a bit, they paralyzed his body for three days to ensure he had no movement that would make his body work any harder than it had to. They also would turn him 'prone,' which meant putting him on his stomach 16 hours a day, because it allowed his lungs to expand within his chest more than if he was laying on his back.

"At that point they didn't know what the problem was because he was so sick when they intubated him that they could not take a sample from his lungs," his parents explained. "So, for those first few days he was on 16 machines, and they were giving him every antibiotic, steroids and anti-inflammatory they could because they had no idea what was wrong."

When he was finally well enough for a lung biopsy, the doctors diagnosed him with staphylococcal pneumonia. The fact that he had gone from being ok to critical in such a short period of time signaled to them that this rapid decline had been caused by vaping, as using a vape when sick can cause rapid bacterial growth. So, when Ryan had been vaping through his

colds, the vape caused the bacteria to spread and blood clots to form in his legs. These clots then traveled to his lungs, causing them to completely fail.

For the next two weeks, Ryan's friends and family lived at the hospital. "He doesn't remember, but at one point when he was semiconscious, he made me pinky promise he would live. We both were so terrified," his mother recollected. The doctors explained that Ryan was as sick as a person could be without dying, so it seemed like a miracle when he began to turn the corner. He finally woke up, disoriented and unsure of what was happening when the nurse was extubating him. He was transferred to the ICU but his doctors made it clear he still had a long way to go.

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Learning a Crucial Life Lesson

When he was finally able to go home, he was given a bunch of medicine to fight off the infection and lingering effects of the pneumonia. He also needed to go to physical therapy to learn how to redo basic things like standing, walking, etc. "He didn't have the strength to even stand up for a while, and so he had to use a wheelchair, then a walker. Plus, he had trouble sleeping, and began suffering from PTSD, something he still struggles with today," his mother explained.

"You really take breathing for granted and you don't realize how much you will miss it until you can't do it," Ryan said.

Ryan continues to improve by following a healthy lifestyle and staying away from vaping. And his experience opened the eyes of those in his inner circle to the dangers of vaping. As a result, many people in his immediate circle have quit. "Broad strokes, I tell people to just stay away from vaping. It's very addictive and if you keep doing it, it gets to the point where there will be something bad that happens to you. I wish that I had been able to have the discipline to stay away from things that my friends and family had told me were dangerous."

Additionally, Ryan learned just how much his actions affect not just him, but those who love him. "You don't really understand, especially if you are young. But I think you need to value your health above everything else because being faced with your own mortality is truly frightening in a way that I can't even put into words. I learned that I have a responsibility not just to myself but to others to stay healthy because there are a lot of people I love, who love me, and I want to be around for them."

Learn more about the [dangers of vaping](#) and [how to quit](#) on our website.

A doctor's warning about the dangers of vaping

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/a-doctors-warning-about-the-dangers-of-vaping>

Vaping is the term often used to describe the use of an electronic nicotine delivery system, or ENDS, including electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, vape pens or vaporizers. These battery-operated devices heat a liquid solution — usually, but not always, containing nicotine — to turn it into a vapor that can be inhaled. If the base nicotine mixture isn't palatable, flavors like mint, apple and cotton candy, can be added that make vaping attractive, especially to adolescents. E-cigarettes can resemble a pen or USB flash drive, and may be disposable after one use or have rechargeable systems.

Unfortunately, today's teens, and even tweens, know more about vaping than their parents. First publicized as a safer alternative to smoking tobacco, vaping caught on because it didn't contain the carcinogens or tars found in most smoking tobacco products. Also, vaping was supposed to eliminate the dangers of secondhand smoke to those nearby.

It all sounded pretty harmless in theory. However, those theories were wrong.

Here are the dangers associated with vaping:

No matter the delivery method, nicotine is addictive.

Studies have shown that it may be harder to quit a nicotine addiction than a heroin addiction. Most discussions about helping teens stop vaping fail to address that they already may be addicted. In many cases, teens at this phase may need a replacement option or medications, such as bupropion, to help curb the nicotine cravings that can be overwhelming.

If you've ever tried to quit smoking or had friends or family members try to quit, you know how difficult it can be. That's why, in certain situations, e-

cigarettes still are considered an option to help someone who has smoked tobacco for years to [become a nonsmoker](#).

The flavors and stabilizers in e-cigarettes can cause unknown inflammation to delicate lung tissue.

All one has to do is turn on the national news to hear about more and more teens who suffered severe — sometimes irreversible — damage to the lungs, and in extreme cases have died as a result of vaping. Adolescents often believe that bad things happen to everyone else, but the risks associated with vaping are real.

Many teens are taking vaping a step further, adding cannabis, CBD oils and other [dangerous additives](#). When patients go to the emergency department in respiratory distress from vaping, it's challenging for healthcare professionals to treat them due to the difficulty in correctly identifying what they inhaled, especially when they are intubated or unconscious.

The length of time spent vaping can be much longer than smoking a standard cigarette.

Did you know that it takes two to five minutes to smoke most cigarettes? On the other hand, e-cigarettes can last up to 20 minutes, delivering more nicotine and damaging chemicals to the lungs. In addition, some vaping mixtures can contain 20 times the nicotine in a single cigarette.

Brain development can be affected.

Nicotine can affect concentration, learning, memory and brain development, according to information and data from a new report from the surgeon general. Also, nicotine use in young adults can still lead to other illicit substance use.

People under 21 can't buy tobacco products, including vape products, under federal law.

Talk about the dangers of vaping

Talk with your kids about the dangers of vaping, but also look for warning signs including:

- Changes in emotions or new behaviors like secrecy
- Dry cough or wheezing
- Scents of fruity odors on skin, breath and clothes
- Strange cylinders, chargers or batteries lying around
- Trouble sleeping

Remember, it's essential to have conversations rather than suspicions and accusations. Encourage your teen to look into the warnings and media stories related to vaping or contact their healthcare team with questions.

Many healthcare professionals ask their patients about alcohol, drug use and smoking, yet forget to ask about vaping. [Project for Teens](#) is an example of a local outreach program that provides support and education on the dangers of vaping. Similar programs may be available in your area. Find resources to help teens quit through the [American Lung Association](#) and teen.smokefree.gov.

It's up to everyone to work together as a community to stop the young population from starting or continuing to use vaping products.

In this video, pulmonologist Adel Zurob, M.D., explains the risks of vaping, smoking and using chewing tobacco, and how the products harm your health: