



Position Statement on active and passive exposure of children and adolescents below 18 years of age to e-cigarettes.

The British Paediatric Respiratory Society (BPRS) strongly condemns the alarming increase in e-cigarette use (vaping) among children and young people and its broader public health implications. This trend is concerning, as it stands in stark contrast to the fundamental principle that human lungs are intended for breathing clean air, not inhaling the harmful substances present in e-cigarettes. In line with this perspective, we propose several key recommendations:

Assumption of Risk: BPRS considers e-cigarettes to be dangerous until proven otherwise. The vast array of chemicals in these products, many with unknown health impacts, necessitates a proactive approach. Manufacturers should bear the burden of proving the safety of these products, similar to the standards applied to medicinal inhalation products.

Nicotine Addiction Gateway: While promoted as a pathway for smoking cessation, we view e-cigarettes as a gateway to nicotine addiction. Preventing this addiction is vital due to its extensive health impacts across multiple body systems.

Ban on Flavourings: BPRS calls for an immediate ban on the addition of flavourings to e-liquids. These flavourings are a deliberate strategy to increase the appeal of e-cigarettes, especially among young people, and do not contribute to their utility as smoking cessation aids.

Ban on Disposable E-cigarettes: BPRS strongly supports the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's (RCPCH) call for an outright ban on disposable e-cigarettes. Disposable e-cigarettes are the most used product by children and young people (CYP). In addition to the lower price point, which makes them more accessible to CYP, there are also concerns about the sheer volume of these products discarded in the UK each week and their detrimental impact on ecosystems and natural resources, which is alarming. Disposable e-cigarettes not only deplete scarce resources but also contaminate soil and water, further contributing to environmental degradation and climate change. The BPRS emphasises the need to proactively tackle loopholes, including USB charging ports and larger 'big puff' e-cigarettes, to prevent companies from bypassing any such ban.

Chemical Toxicity and Passive Exposure: E-cigarettes contain various chemicals, some of which are known to be harmful, carcinogenic, pro-inflammatory, and immunosuppressive. We insist on protecting children and young people from these chemicals, including passive exposure.

Acute Toxicity Concerns: The acute toxicity of e-cigarettes is believed to exceed that of conventional tobacco products. BPRS emphasizes the need to protect young people from the multiple acute lung diseases associated with e-cigarettes.

Unknown Long-term Effects: Given the greater acute toxicity of e-cigarettes compared to tobacco, BPRS considers their potential medium and long-term toxicity to be a significant concern. Until proven otherwise, these effects should be regarded as being at least as harmful as those associated with tobacco.

Legislative Protection: BPRS advocates for e-cigarettes to be legislatively equated with tobacco products. This includes banning e-cigarette use in public and enclosed spaces, prohibiting advertising, enforcing plain packaging with health warnings, stringent control of point of sale displays, and imposing strict penalties for selling these products to minors.

Social Media Regulation: BPRS calls for social media platforms to be held accountable and take immediate, forceful action to address their part in attracting young and underage individuals to e-cigarette use and in providing access to these products. It is crucial that these companies recognise their significant role in this pressing issue and act swiftly to eliminate content that promotes or glamorises e-cigarette use among the youth. We call for rigorous monitoring and the proactive removal of such content, underscoring the need for these platforms to implement strict measures to stem this concerning trend.

Dr Julian Legg,
BPRS President
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