

## Vaping for Service Users / Tangata Whaiora at Te Whetu Tawera

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## 1. Purpose of policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process and rules around the provision of vaping products for Te Whetu Tawera (TWT) Service Users / Tangata Whaiora who smoke, as an alternative to cigarette (combustible) smoking, and to manage nicotine dependency and symptoms of severe cigarette withdrawal.

This policy relates to users of mental health and addiction services and does not include mental health staff and visitors to TWT.

## 2. Policy statements

- Smoking cigarettes is a major cause of health inequities, especially for Maori.
- Vaping is less harmful than combustible cigarette smoking.
- Vaping is the most effective support tool for smoking cessation.
- Vaping is not for youth or non-smokers.
- It is recommended to be nicotine free when pregnant.

## 3. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Auckland DHB</b>	Auckland District Health Board
<b>CYP1A2</b>	cytochrome P-450 1A2
<b>MHN</b>	Mental Health nurse
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NRT</b>	nicotine replacement therapy
<b>SU</b>	service user
<b>TWT</b>	Te Whetu Tawera

## 4. Background

People with mental illness are over-represented in smoking rates and amount of cigarettes smoked daily compared to the general population (Spears et al., (2017). An historical smoking culture in mental health settings have made compliance with DHB smoke-free policies challenging. People who smoke regard smoking as pleasurable and believe it alleviates their agitation and anxiety. The reduction and / or stopping of smoking is extremely difficult for most smokers, since nicotine is highly addictive, and cessation is associated with withdrawal symptoms. (Nutt, et al., 2014; McNeill et al., 2020; Ministry of Health, 2016).

Service users (SU)/Tangata Whaiora admitted to a closed mental health unit may be in an intense state of mental distress. This distress may be compounded by withdrawal from not smoking. The urge to smoke cigarettes as a source of comfort and familiarity may be very strong at this unsettling time. SU who are unable to smoke their usual cigarettes may experience heightened

emotions and aggression, triggered by withdrawal symptoms, alongside their mental ill-health and admission to the mental health unit.

Providing an environment with appropriate nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), and the availability of vaping products has been shown to reduce aggression and assaults towards staff by 47% (Robson et al., 2017).

Evidence based literature has demonstrated that electronic smoking products are 95% safer for a person's physical health, as opposed to the smoking of traditional combustible cigarettes. (Ministry of Health, 2016, McNeill et al., 2020). In addition, the use of electronic smoking devices maybe more effective in assisting the person to reduce their smoking, compared with NRT products.

Allowing vaping in mental health services provides support for the SU / Tangata Whaiora to reduce and/or quit smoking. Use of vaping and/or NRT prescription to stop smoking combustible cigarettes doubles the chances of stopping when paired with behavioural support from the local DHB smoke free team.

People who are exclusively vaping (not combustible cigarettes) are deemed to be smoke free (Ministry of Health, 2016).

## 5. Vaping device

Vaping is the inhaling of a vapour created by a vaping device. They are electronically powered smoking devices that hold pods filled with a liquid that may contain nicotine, flavourings, and chemicals. The liquid is heated into a vapour, which the person inhales.

The type of vape product that will be available at TWT is a Mouth-to-Lung closed pod system (example below).



Mouth-to-Lung devices are helpful for smoking cessation, as the inhaling mechanism is similar to smoking. They are discreet, have small clouds, and can deliver high levels of nicotine (which helps for reducing severe withdrawal symptoms).

This system delivers nicotine salts that become vapour. It is a simple effective device that helps smokers to transition away from cigarettes.

### 5.1 Nicotine dosage

- A pod containing 4% equals 40 mg nicotine per pod.
- One pod is roughly equivalent to about 30-40 cigarettes.
- A person may have a maximum of one pod per day.

## 5.2 Directions for use

- Remove the pod from the blister pack.
- Insert the pod into the vaping device. The pod will slot in and fix securely by magnets.
- The vaping device is fully charged after 60 minutes using a 0.5 Amp charger.
- Once the pod has been inserted into the device and the device is charged, the SU will simply breathe in from the mouthpiece and the white light on the alt device will indicate the device is operating correctly.

## 6. Implementation of vaping at TWT

### 6.1 Procurement and storage of vaping supplies

- Vaporing products will be available for ordering on the Auckland DHB Oracle ordering system.
- Only the approved device and flavours (tobacco/menthol) will be available for use.
- The vaping products will be stored in the medication room, alongside the NRT products.

### 6.2 Issuing to Service Users

- Before issuing the vape to the SU/Tangata Whaiora, the nurse will explain the possible side effects that may be experienced when inhaling the nicotine salts containing vapour from the vape.
- The vape will be labelled with the SU/Tangata Whaiora patient label, and will be their personal property.
- Following overnight charging, ensure the right labelled vape is returned to the right patient.

### 6.3 Use of vapes at TWT

- Vaping will only be permitted in an open air courtyard.
- No vaping products are to be used indoors.
- Vapes are not to be shared among service users.
- Visitors and mental health staff are not permitted to vape with the service users.
- Vaping is not permitted from 2100 to 0800, as the outside courtyard is locked and unavailable to SU/Tangata Whaiora at night. During that time NRT is available to support nicotine withdrawal symptoms.
- At 2100 the vape products are returned to ward staff, and after cleaning the mouthpiece with an alcohol swab, will be stored in a restricted area overnight and recharged.

### 6.4 Cleaning vapes

- Take the vape with gloved hands and clean the mouthpiece with an alcohol swab, to prevent skin contact with the SU's saliva on the mouthpiece.
- The pods are removed and discarded into the available recycling bins

### 6.5 Disposal of vaping products

- These vapouring pods are recyclable.
- Recycling bins will be available in the medication room and treatment rooms.

## 6.6 Charging the device

- These devices are charged by the nurses/mental health assistants, using the specific USB 0.5Amp chargers included with the device.
- The charger is connected to a suitable wall plug.
- **DO NOT USE HIGH AMP WALL CHARGERS.** Wall chargers such as those used to fast charge phones are NOT suitable for charging vapes.

## 6.7 Safety Considerations

- The close pod systems have a safety anti-leakage system. If a leakage occurs and the liquid containing nicotine salts becomes in contact with skin, eyes, or mouth, do the following:
- If in contact with eyes, rinse continuously with water for several minutes.
- Remove the contact lenses, if present.
- Wash skin area with soap and water
- If skin irritation or rash occurs, obtain medical advice.

## 7. Side Effects

Side effects caused by nicotine salts delivered by inhalation:

Likely or common	Less common or rare	Very rare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coughing</li> <li>• Dry mouth</li> <li>• Runny nose</li> <li>• Change in taste</li> <li>• Diarrhoea</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Mouth irritation</li> <li>• Throat irritation</li> <li>• Tachycardia</li> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Rash/Itching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Numbness/tingling in hands/feet/ankles</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Severe headaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis</li> <li>• Severe difficulty breathing</li> </ul>

## 8. Special Considerations

### 8.1 Clozapine and cigarette smoking

Hydrocarbons in tobacco smoke can increase clozapine metabolism (through CYP1A2 induction) and lower plasma clozapine levels. Hence regular smokers taking clozapine will often need a higher dose to achieve therapeutic concentrations compared with non-smokers. If smoking cessation occurs, the induction of enzymes is removed and less clozapine will be metabolised, resulting in the potential for toxic accumulation in a short period. Clozapine dose reduction will likely be necessary.

Vaping products do not appear to affect clozapine metabolism. Therefore, service users who stop smoking cigarettes and change to vaping will likely experience similar increases in clozapine levels. Clozapine levels need to be carefully monitored and doses adjusted accordingly.

## 8.2 Pregnancy

It appears that vaping has less of a detrimental effect on birthweight outcomes than smoking, so pregnant smokers struggling with smoking cessation could benefit from using vaping products in attempts to quit smoking. However, more research would increase the confidence of this recommendation (Calder et al, 2021).

It is recommended to be nicotine free when pregnant (vapingfacts.health.nz).

## 9. The Ministry of Health position statement on vaping

- The best thing that smokers can do is to quit smoking for good
- Vaping products are intended for smokers only
- Vaping products carry less risk than smoking cigarettes, but are not risk free
- Stop smoking services should support smokers who choose to use vaping products to stop smoking.
- Vaping products have the potential to make a contribution to the Smokefree 2025 goal, and could disrupt the significant smoking inequalities in New Zealand.

## 10. Supporting evidence

- Calder, R., Gant, E., Bauld, L., McNeill, A., Robson, D., & Brose, L. S. (2021). Vaping in Pregnancy: A Systematic Review. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 23(9), 1451–1458. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntab017>
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- Spears, C. A., Jones, D. M., Weaver, S. R., Pechacek, T. F., & Eriksen, M. P. (2016). Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems among Adults with Mental Health Conditions, 2015. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14010010>
- VAPO (VEC Limited). (2022). *Nicotine salts*. <https://www.vapo.co.nz/pages/nicotine-salts>

## 11. Associated documents

- Clozapine use and management of side effects for an adult
- Nicotine Withdrawal Management
- Search for illicit substances and hazardous items - Te Whetu Tawera

## 12. Disclaimer

No guideline can cover all variations required for specific circumstances. It is the responsibility of the health care practitioners using this Auckland DHB guideline to adapt it for safe use within their own institution, recognise the need for specialist help, and call for it without delay, when an individual patient falls outside of the boundaries of this guideline.

## 13. Corrections and amendments

The next scheduled review of this document is as per the document classification table (page 1). However, if the reader notices any errors or believes that the document should be reviewed **before** the scheduled date, they should contact the owner or [Document Control](#) without delay.