

Council expectations of pharmacists on the use of vaping and smokeless tobacco products for smoking cessation

Council's position

“It is the opinion of Council that, on the basis of existing guidance, pharmacists should not supply or recommend electronic cigarettes or vaping products to non-smokers. Pharmacists should only consider the supply or recommend the use of these products as part of a smoking cessation plan in accordance with legislative requirements, after giving due consideration to the likely risks and benefits for the individual. Pharmacist assessment must be on a case by case basis and include review of the individual’s pre-existing conditions and /or treatments.”

1. The Pharmacy Council wishes to provide pharmacists with guidance on recommending vaping and smokeless tobacco products for smoking cessation.
2. In March 2011 the Government adopted the Smokefree 2025 goal for New Zealand¹. The Ministry of Health recognises that vaping and smokeless tobacco products may provide a significantly less harmful alternative to smoking and may contribute to the achievement of the Smokefree 2025 goal.
3. There are no longitudinal studies to describe the long-term effects of electronic cigarette use or vaping.
4. The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Act 2020 regulates the supply of vaping products and smokeless tobacco products. Pharmacists must comply with all requirements if stocking or supplying vaping products or smokeless tobacco products. These requirements include (but are not limited to) restrictions on advertising activities, range of products stocked, and minimum age of purchasers.
5. The website <https://vapingfacts.health.nz/> was commissioned by the Ministry of Health and provides New Zealanders with a source of clear and credible information about vaping as a way to stop smoking.
6. Council recommends pharmacists utilise the Ministry website to access consistent information for the public regarding vaping and refer patients to the site when appropriate.
7. Pharmacists are also bound by the Code of Ethics 2018, the Competence Standards 2015, and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights. As part of the informed consent process, a pharmacist must discuss with their patients the potential risks associated with products they recommend or supply.

¹ <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/tobacco-control/smokefree-aotearoa-2025>

8. Council expects pharmacists to consider whether the supply of vaping products or electronic cigarettes aligns with their ethical and professional obligations. It is essential that pharmacists weigh up the potential positive versus negative effects of electronic cigarettes or vaping products upon the health outcomes of their patients and/or the public.
9. Pharmacists should consider recommending, where appropriate, smoking cessation products which are currently approved as medicines by Medsafe, such as nicotine replacement therapies. These products have been subject to more rigorous research allowing the practitioner and patient to be more certain of the potential risks and benefits.
10. As always pharmacists should engage patients to determine their individual circumstances, provide impartial, evidence-based advice and facilitate an informed consent process.

Relevant Documents

Legislation

Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Act 2020

Standards

Competence Standards for the Pharmacy Profession 2015

Codes

Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights

Pharmacy Council Code of Ethics 2018