# Experts warn against 'smart vapes' targeting children with games and nicotine



Experts have raised concerns over a new wave of vaping devices known as "smart vapes," which incorporate built-in video games and other interactive features, potentially attracting children and teenagers. These devices, retailing online for around £40 in the UK, combine nicotine delivery with entertainment functions such as pre-installed games, music playback, phone calls, and fitness tracking.

Such "smart vapes" include models branded as Posh Pro MAX, Craftbox V-Touch, and Halo SYNIX. They resemble smartphones or gaming gadgets, with some including built-in speakers and social media notifications, powered by rechargeable batteries and equipped with Bluetooth technology that allows syncing with smartphones.

A British Medical Journal forum post authored by experts Artur Galimov, Liam Obaid, and Jennifer B. Unger drew attention last month to the risks posed by the integration of smartphone-like designs and functionalities in vaping devices. They argue these features appeal to younger users by making the devices easier to conceal from adults and increasing their attractiveness.

Jennifer B. Unger, a professor of population and public health sciences at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, voiced her apprehensions about this rise in "smartphone" vapes. Speaking to MyLondon, she said: "I think they could have a really damaging impact on youth. These devices are combining three things that are highly reinforcing: nicotine, video games, and sweet flavours. And they're being packaged in a way that makes them feel safe, fun, and even nostalgic."

Professor Unger pointed out that these devices frequently appear on retail websites and social media platforms, promoted not only as nicotine products but as trendy gadgets. She noted, "Some of them look like gaming consoles or phones, and others are actually playable, with retro-style games built right in." Marketing efforts often involve influencers, unboxing videos, and viral content on platforms like TikTok, making the devices particularly appealing to young people.

She highlighted a significant difference compared to traditional vapes: "A conventional vape just delivers nicotine. These newer devices add in gaming elements—sometimes with full-on video games that reward the user with points or prizes every time they take a puff." This combination creates a powerful reinforcement loop by delivering both chemical and psychological rewards simultaneously, shifting vaping from a mere habit to an entertaining activity.

The devices’ design focuses on discreteness and emotional appeal. Professor Unger explained, "When you combine nicotine with gaming—especially in a product that looks like a toy or a phone—you’re adding multiple layers of appeal, especially for kids and teens. That makes them harder for adults to recognise and harder for young people to quit."

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) took regulatory action in October last year by warning nine online sellers and one manufacturer to cease selling e-cigarettes that imitate smart technology. Brian King, director of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, described such products as illegal and "a flagrant attempt to target kids."

Professor Unger stressed the need for a coordinated response, stating: "At the policy level, we need the FDA to draw a clear line: if a product delivers nicotine, it should not also be a toy or a game. That’s a line we should not be crossing." She also called for assistance for schools and parents to better identify these novel vaping products, emphasising that these devices do not resemble traditional vapes.

She added: "We need to push back against marketing that targets kids in such deceptive and manipulative ways. Education is important—but so is enforcement. These devices don’t just show up by accident. They are designed and marketed with intention. And we need to respond with the same level of intention."

The growing presence of these multifunctional vaping devices raises new challenges for public health and regulatory bodies, as their blend of nicotine delivery and interactive entertainment may increase vaping initiation and complicate detection and cessation efforts among young people.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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