

UK unveils plan to ban disposable e-cigarettes

January 29 2024



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The UK will introduce legislation to ban disposable e-cigarettes in order to tackle a rise in youth vaping, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced Monday.

"You talk to any parent or teacher, they will talk to you about the worrying rise in vaping among children," Sunak told the media during a visit to a school in Darlington, northeast England.

"It's right we take strong action to stamp this out, banning disposable vapes, taking powers to go after the flavors, the appearance, the packaging, where vapes are displayed in stores," he added.

"Children shouldn't be vaping."

Pre-filled disposable e-cigarettes, known as "puffs", are popular with young people, can have a high nicotine content, come in many flavors and are cheap.

The government cited recent figures showing the proportion of vapers under the age of 18 who use disposables has increased almost ninefold in the last two years.

Sunak's government also plans to introduce fines for shops in England and Wales that sell vapes illegally to children.

Health experts welcomed the proposal, with Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty saying the legislation would have "a major public health impact across many future generations".

Mike McKean, from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, praised the move, which he called "bold action".

"Banning disposables is a meaningful step in the right direction," he added.

'Nanny state'

Sunak last year announced plans to eventually make the UK a smoke-free nation.

His proposals would make it an offense for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products—effectively raising the smoking age by a year each year until it applies to the whole population.

"I propose that in future, we raise the smoking age by one year every year. That means a 14-year-old today will never legally be sold a cigarette, and that they and their generation can grow up smoke-free," Sunak told his Conservative party's annual conference in October.

At present, the purchase age for tobacco products in England and Wales is 18.

Sunak said that smoking was responsible for one hospital admission every minute in the UK, but stopped short of pushing for a total ban on vapes, arguing it was important to keep them "for adult smokers who want to stop".

However, some Tories are pushing back against his bid to phase out smoking, including former prime minister Liz Truss.

She tweeted that the government "should abandon its profoundly unconservative plans for the ban on tobacco sales," calling it an extension of the "nanny state".

The UK announcement follows the French parliament's unanimous vote in December to ban single-use e-cigarettes, although the law still needs backing from France's upper house Senate and clearance from the EU Commission.

Germany has also signaled an intent to take action while Belgium is

awaiting the EU's approval for a ban.

The sale of all vapes is currently banned in over 30 countries, with 79 other countries regulating them through legislation, while 84 countries have no bans or regulations in place, according to the World Health Organization.

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Citation: UK unveils plan to ban disposable e-cigarettes (2024, January 29) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-01-uk-unveils-disposable-cigarettes.html>

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