

# Want to quit vaping? There's an app for that

March 27 2024, by Fiona McKay and Matthew Dunn

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More Australians than ever are vaping, according to recently released data.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey [shows](#) the proportion of Australians aged 14 and over who, in 2022–2023, said they currently

vaped was 7%. In 2019 it was just 2.5%. Users are most likely to be aged 18-24.

As we learn more about the potential harms of [vaping](#), [many](#) will be keen to quit.

But because vapes have only been widespread in recent years, there is [limited evidence](#) on how to go about quitting. With the addictive nature of nicotine-containing vapes, it can also be hard to stop vaping on your own.

Could apps be the answer? The [vast majority](#) of young people have a smartphone. And we know apps have helped people [quit smoking](#). So why not use apps to help people quit vaping?

But which apps are best? And which app [features](#) should you look for? Our [recently published study](#) gives us some clues.

## **We tested 30 apps**

We searched the Apple iTunes and Google Play stores in May 2023 to identify apps available in Australia claiming to help people quit vaping.

We then made a shortlist of 20 iOS apps and ten Android apps to assess for:

- [quality](#) (including ease of use, how it engaged users, appearance, and the information it conveyed)
- the potential to [change behavior](#) (including setting goals, making an action plan, identifying barriers, monitoring progress and giving feedback).

## Here's what we found

The highest rated app overall was the iOS app [Quit smoking. Stop vaping app](#). This had 19 out of 21 features known to help people change behavior.

The highest rated app for Android devices was [Quit Tracker: Stop Smoking](#), with 15 behavior change features.

The highest rated app for both [Android](#) and [iOS users](#) was the QuitSure Quit Smoking Smartly app. This had 15 behavior change features for iOS users and 14 for Android users.

## So what should I look for?

There are key [app features](#) to look for in an app that could help you change your behavior. These features also apply to apps helping people to quit alcohol, or to take more exercise, for instance. These features include:

- **full customisability**, allowing individuals to tailor the app to their needs
- **goal setting**, allowing individuals to create their own goals, monitor their progress, then update them over time. This is [more likely](#) to lead to positive behavior change
- **external help**, allowing users to access more help or advice, directly from the app
- apps that are **easy to use** or navigate, so users are more likely to

stick with the app.

But not all apps we assessed scored highly on these. On average, apps only had about nine out of 21 behavior change features. And only 12 of the 30 apps included a goal-setting feature.

The overall quality of the apps was moderate—scoring about three out of five. While apps were easy to use and navigate, we found they were not always transparent in who funded or developed them.

## Future apps

Earlier research shows quit [smoking](#) apps [rate higher](#) for their potential to change behavior than ones to quit vaping.

In one study, researchers found more than half of users of one quit smoking app were still not smoking [after a month](#).

So app developers could look at quit smoking apps to identify strategies and features to develop or update quit vaping apps.

App developers need to create apps with comprehensive goal-setting features. These apps need to be trialed or tested by the developer, users or an external party. This is important as, to our knowledge, no publicly available app has undergone such testing.

As many young people vape to [relieve stress or anxiety](#), future apps could provide extra features, such as meditation, cognitive behavior therapy and relaxation.

Apps need to align with current [guidelines](#) on how to quit vaping, so evidence-based messaging is consistent. Unfortunately, information and guidelines on quitting vaping are in their infancy and vary across

different countries or jurisdictions.

Developers also need to ensure they disclose who owns and paid for the app. Is it a commercial company, a research group, a government agency, or a not-for-profit? We found it difficult to tell during our analysis.

Last of all, quit vaping apps need to be updated and improved over time, to iron out bugs, make improvements as the evidence changes, and to respond to changes in how users behave.

In an ideal world, we'd see partnerships between [app developers](#), people who vape, researchers and experts in health behavior change to develop and update quit vaping apps—ones with the highest chance of actually shifting people's behavior.

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