

## Electronic Cigarettes - Frequently Asked Questions

### What are electronic cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are battery-powered devices which heat a solution that typically contains nicotine and propylene glycol or glycerine, producing a vapour.

They are 'vaped' rather than smoked and although the vapour contains some potentially harmful chemicals, also found in cigarette smoke, these are at much lower levels.

Unlike tobacco cigarettes, e-cigarettes do not contain cancer-causing tobacco or involve combustion. So there is no smoke, tar or carbon monoxide.

### Who is using electronic cigarettes?

E-cigarettes have become the most popular stop smoking aid in England. An estimated 2.9 million adults in Great Britain currently use them. Of these, 1.5 million have completely stopped smoking and 1.3 million continue to smoke alongside their e-cigarette use.

### What is the difference between first, second and third-generation electronic cigarettes?

There are many different types of e-cigarettes, often referred to as first, second or third generation.

- First-generation e-cigarettes (also known as 'cigalikes') look like a cigarette and generally use cartomisers (refills).
- Second-generation e-cigarettes tend to be larger and have a more powerful battery with adjustable power settings. The battery is linked to an atomiser (heating element) and a 'tank' which users can fill with their choice of e-liquid.
- Third-generation e-cigarettes are normally even larger and allow users to adjust the air flow, voltage or wattage applied to the atomiser.

Research suggests that the newer devices may be better at delivering nicotine, but users should use the device that suits them best.

## Are electronic cigarettes cheaper than smoking?

Many people can save hundreds of pounds over the course of a year after making the switch from cigarettes to e-cigarettes. Each person will use their e-cigarette differently, and across a wide range of devices and liquids, so prices can vary.

A starter kit for third generation devices typically ranges from £20 to £70 and users will occasionally need to replace the atomiser, which costs a couple of pounds, and purchase e-liquid. But after purchasing a starter kit, e-cigarettes will often work out cheaper over time than smoking.

## Health Risks

### Are electronic cigarettes safe?

E-cigarettes are not risk free, but based on current evidence they carry a fraction of the risk of cigarettes. A review commissioned by Public Health England in 2015 stated the current best estimate is that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than smoking.

There remain some questions around long-term safety of these products due to the lack of long-term health studies. However, the overall assessment is that based on current evidence, there is no doubt that smokers who switch to vaping dramatically reduce the risks to their health.

### Are e-liquid flavours safe?

There are many different flavours of e-cigarettes, and the variety is one of the things that attracts some people to switching to e-cigarettes.

E-cigarette toxicity tests have looked at flavoured e-liquids, and demonstrated relative safety compared to smoking. However, it is important to note that because of the wide variety available, it is not possible to provide safety information for all types on the market

### Is there carbon monoxide in electronic cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes do not contain carbon monoxide (CO) or many of the other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes.

### What about the risks from nicotine?

The great majority of the harm from smoking comes from inhaling tobacco smoke which contains around 4,000 chemicals, a significant number of which are toxic. While it is nicotine that makes tobacco so addictive, it is relatively harmless. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is widely used to help people stop smoking and is a safe form of treatment, including during pregnancy.

## Is electronic cigarette vapour harmful to others?

So far, there is no evidence that exposure to e-cigarette vapour causes harm to other bystanders. The available evidence indicates that any risk of harm is extremely low, especially when compared with secondhand tobacco smoke.

## Young people

### Are electronic cigarettes a gateway into smoking?

There are some concerns that e-cigarettes could renormalise smoking or act as a gateway to young people taking up smoking cigarettes. So far there is insufficient evidence to support this view in the UK.

## Licensing

### What age can you buy an electronic cigarette?

It is illegal to sell e-cigarette products to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under 18s in the UK.

### How are electronic cigarettes regulated?

The revised EU Tobacco Product Directive (TPD) came into full force in May 2017, and created a dual-track approach for regulating e-cigarettes. Regulations to implement the revised TPD have been transposed into British Law through the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR). It is through these regulations that the TPD is implemented and enforced.

Electronic cigarettes which contain up to 20mg per ml of nicotine are regulated as consumer products as is required by the TPD. The new product rules under the TPD for e-cigarettes include:

- A size limit for e-liquids of 10ml for dedicated refill containers and 2ml for disposable e-cigarettes, cartridges and tanks.
- A requirement for products to be child and tamper proof.
- A requirement for the pack to include a health warning covering 30% of the surfaces of the unit packet and any outside packaging stating 'This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance.'
- A requirement for the instructions for use, information on addictiveness and toxicity on the packaging and accompanying information leaflet.
- A ban on certain promotional and misleading descriptors on packaging.
- Ensuring that all substances contained in the product and information on the product's nicotine content are declared on the label.

- A requirement for the manufacturers to inform Member States before placing new or modified products on the market and notifying a range of product information concerning composition, emissions and sales/marketing data.
- Introducing a registration scheme for businesses engaged in cross-border distance sales of e-cigarette products.
- Prohibiting the advertising or promotion, directly or indirectly, of electronic cigarettes and re-fill containers on a number of media platforms, including on television, radio, newspapers and magazines.
- Products containing over 20mg per ml of nicotine or which make smoking cessation claims are required to have a medicinal license. These products will require authorisation by the UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and will be subject to MRHA rules and regulations.

### **Are there any electronic cigarettes licensed?**

E-Voke, produced by British American Tobacco's subsidiary Nicoventures, is currently the only e-cigarette product granted a medicinal license by the MHRA. Medicinal licenses allow the product to be marketed as a smoking cessation aid, to make health claims and to be prescribed by health professionals as well as sold over the counter in pharmacies. However, although granted a license, e-Voke is not commercially available in the UK market so cannot be prescribed or sold over the counter. If and when it becomes available, marketing of the product will be subject to MHRA rules on the advertising of medicines.

### **Is it illegal to use an electronic cigarette in an enclosed public place?**

In the UK there are no laws preventing or restricting where you can use e-cigarettes. However, some businesses and public buildings have decided themselves not to allow vaping inside their premises.

## **Safety**

### **Do electronic cigarettes pose a fire risk?**

There have been instances of e-cigarettes exploding or catching fire. As with all rechargeable electrical equipment, to manage fire risk the correct charger for the device should always be used and always follow the manufacturer's instructions for charging, use and disposal of the e-cig. Charging requirements vary from one device to the other.

Always keep the device away from flammable or combustible materials such as a bed or soft furnishings. In addition e-cigarettes should not be left charging unattended or overnight and don't exceed the recommended charging time. Users should buy their e-cigarette products from a reputable retailer to ensure they are compliant with UK safety regulations and carries a CE certification.

### **How can electronic cigarettes users report a safety concern?**

It is important to report any potential safety concerns associated with the use of e-cigarette products. If users suspect they have experienced a side effect to their health from using an e-cigarette or would like to report a safety concern relating to a product defect, this should be reported via the [Yellow Card Scheme: https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/](https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/)

### **Have there been any reported cases of exploding electronic cigarettes?**

Incidents are very rare but can cause severe burns and injuries, especially when they explode in users' hands, pockets or mouths. The cause is uncertain but appears to be related to malfunctioning lithium-ion batteries.

### **Have there been any recorded cases of poisonings from e-liquid?**

There are recorded cases of poisoning from e-liquid in the UK. These have mainly involved accidental ingestion.

Intentional poisoning using e-liquids has been reported in self-harm and suicide attempts.

Toxic effects from e-cigarette poisoning are usually short in duration and of minimal severity. Severe cases and fatalities, while very rare, have been recorded.

E-cigarette poisonings reported to medical centres most commonly occur in children under 5 years old. Toxic effects for this age group are usually short in duration and non-severe. Fatalities, while very rare, have also been recorded in this age group.

Incidents of poisoning in children are often preventable and have involved liquids stored non-securely, in unmarked containers or in containers without safety caps.

## **Quitting smoking**

### **Can electronic cigarettes be prescribed?**

E-cigarettes are currently not available on prescription in the UK, and there are no e-cigarettes licensed as a medicine commercially available in the UK.

In the meantime, e-cigarettes can be bought from vape shops, pharmacies and other retail outlets.

### **Can Stop Smoking Services support people who want to use an e-cigarette to quit smoking?**

Evidence indicates that e-cigarettes are particularly effective when combined with additional support from local stop smoking services: in 2014-15, smokers in England who combined e-cigarette use with behavioural support had the highest quit rates, with two out of three quitting successfully.

Although most services can't supply e-cigarettes they can provide expert advice, support and encouragement to anyone wanting to quit smoking. Trained advisors provide one to one support over a number of weeks and will help smokers to think about how they will cope with cravings and withdrawal symptoms. The advisor will measure levels of carbon monoxide in the body (the CO level) which can help motivate smokers to quit and to remain abstinent.

### **Pregnant Smokers**

#### **Are electronic cigarettes safe to use in pregnancy?**

E-cigarettes aren't risk free but they are much less harmful than smoking. If using an e-cigarette helps the pregnant women stay smoke free it is much safer for them and their baby than smoking.

E-cigarettes are still fairly new and we don't yet have evidence on whether there are any effects of longer term use. We also don't know about any risks to unborn babies from exposure to vapour but they are still much less harmful than smoking.

#### **Can pregnant women use electronic cigarettes to quit smoking?**

Pregnant women who smoke should be advised to access behavioural support and, if needed, licensed nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products, which are free when prescribed, to help them quit smoking and stay smoke free. However, if they choose to use an electronic cigarette and this helps them to stay smoke free, it is safer for both them and their unborn baby than continuing to smoke.

\*Please see Appendix 1, Smoking in Pregnancy e-cigarette infographic, for further information on using e-cigarettes to quit smoking during pregnancy.

## **For further information on Electronic Cigarettes**

Smoking Cessation: a briefing for midwifery staff NCSCT 2015:

[http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication\\_briefing\\_for\\_midwifery\\_staff.php](http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_briefing_for_midwifery_staff.php)

E-cigarettes: an evidence update August PHE 2015:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-an-evidence-update>

Use of e-cigarettes in public places and workplaces PHE July 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-e-cigarettes-in-public-places-and-workplaces>

Electronic cigarettes: A briefing for stop smoking services NCSCT 2016:

[http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication\\_electronic\\_cigarette\\_briefing.php](http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_electronic_cigarette_briefing.php)

ASH Briefing: Electronic cigarettes ASH 2016:

<http://ash.org.uk/stopping-smoking/ash-briefing-on-electronic-cigarettes-2/>

Evidence review of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products 2018: executive summary Updated 12 February 2018:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-evidence-review/evidence-review-of-e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-2018-executive-summary#heated-tobacco-products>



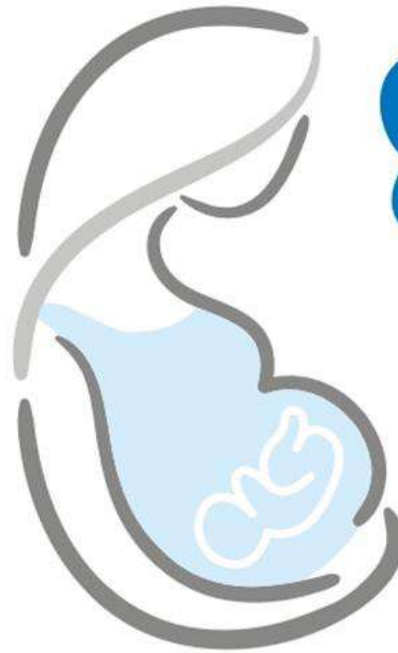
# E-cigarettes in pregnancy

## Are e-cigarettes safe to use?

- E-cigarettes aren't risk free, but they are much less harmful than smoking
- If using an e-cigarette helps you stay smokefree, it is much safer for you and your baby than smoking

## Can I still smoke a bit of tobacco?

- NO - Every cigarette harms you and your baby
- The only way to stop this is to stop smoking tobacco completely
- You can use your e-cigarette as often as you need to stay smokefree



## Can I use an e-cigarette to help me quit smoking?

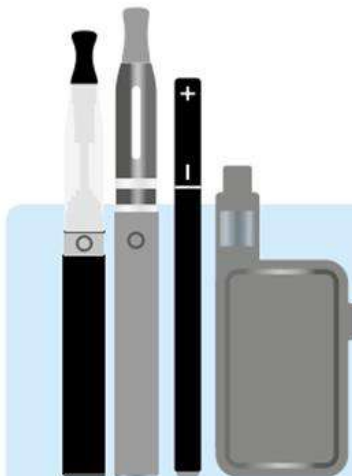
- The safest products to use are nicotine replacements such as patches and gum
- If you find an e-cigarette helpful, it is far safer than continuing to smoke

## Is nicotine harmful for my baby?

- Nicotine alone is relatively harmless
- The main harm from smoking comes from the thousands of chemicals in tobacco smoke

## Is it OK for others to use e-cigarettes around me?

- It is far safer than allowing smoking
- Secondhand tobacco smoke is very harmful to you and your baby
- There is no evidence of harm to others from e-cigarette vapour



## Using an e-cigarette is far safer than smoking

- E-cigarettes allow you to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than smoke
- E-cigarettes don't burn tobacco, and don't produce tar or carbon monoxide
- Vapour contains much lower levels of harmful chemicals than smoke



For more information on quitting smoking ask your midwife, GP or pharmacy team or search NHS Smokefree.

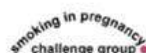


Always keep e-cigarettes and e-liquids out of the reach of children to avoid accidental poisoning. Always use the correct charger.



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References available from  
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