

The Truth About E-Cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes, also called e-cigarettes, are devices that let you breathe in scented or flavored vapor (mist) that looks and feels like tobacco smoke. In this handout, you will learn the truth about e-cigarettes and why they are another form of smoking tobacco products, like cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco.

WHAT ARE ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES?

Electronic cigarettes (also called e-cigarettes) are devices that let you breathe in scented or flavored vapor (mist) that looks and feels like tobacco smoke. This is called **vaping**.

E-cigarettes have a battery that heats liquid from a cartridge that can be refilled. The heat from the battery turns the liquid into a vapor that you breathe in, similar to how you smoke a cigarette, cigar or pipe.

There are different types of e-cigarettes, including vape pens, e-hookahs and e-pipes. These devices are called **ENDS** (electronic nicotine delivery systems).

ARE E-CIGARETTES SAFER THAN OTHER TOBACCO PRODUCTS?

No, e-cigarettes are not safe. They are another form of smoking tobacco products, like cigarettes, cigars, pipes and chewing tobacco. This is because the liquid in an e-cigarette has a drug called **nicotine**. Nicotine is also in other tobacco products. It is very **addictive**, meaning it can make you addicted to it or dependent on it.

The truth is that breathing in the liquid is another form of smoking. In an e-cigarette, nicotine is mixed with scented or flavored vapor. This can make it seem safer because there isn't any tobacco burning like you would see with smoking tobacco products. The vapor also has other chemicals that can hurt your lungs or cause cancer.

WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT E-CIGARETTES?

E-cigarettes are bad for many reasons, but here are 3 important ones:

- **You don't know what's in the liquid in an e-cigarette.** The FDA checks and controls the ingredients in other tobacco products. The FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) is a government company that checks the quality and safety of food and drugs. The FDA is still working on checking and controlling what goes into e-cigarettes. This means that e-cigarette companies don't have to change what they put into the liquid. This also means e-cigarette companies don't have to say what they put in the liquid or how much nicotine goes into it.
- **E-cigarettes likely make it harder to quit smoking, not easier.** Companies that make e-cigarettes say they make it easier to quit smoking. This isn't true. There are other safer, proven ways to help people quit. In products that help people quit smoking, like nicotine gum or patches, the amount of nicotine is controlled by the FDA. The FDA doesn't check or control how much nicotine goes into the liquid in an e-cigarette. This means there might be more nicotine and other bad ingredients in the liquid than you think.
- **The nicotine in the liquid forms addiction pathways in your brain.** In your teen years, your brain is still growing and developing. It doesn't stop until you're about 25. When nicotine enters your brain, it makes pathways, or roads, to **addiction**. This means you become addicted to, or controlled by, the nicotine. These addiction pathways are hard to break once they are formed. This makes it harder to quit later on.

HOW CAN I QUIT USING E-CIGARETTES OR USING OTHER TOBACCO PRODUCTS?

There are many resources to help you quit. Here are some free and low-cost resources:

- **The Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine team at MassGeneral Hospital for Children (MGHfC).** We can help you come up with ways to quit that work just for you. We won't judge you. We are here to help.
- **SmokefreeTXT program.** A free text messaging program with advice, tips and encouragement on how to quit. Text QUIT to IQUIT. Having a quit smoking counselor can double your chances of quitting for good. Visit www.teen.smokefree.gov to learn more.
- **800-QUITNOW.** A free quit line from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Call for free advice and tips on quitting smoking from professional counselors. Having a quit smoking counselor can double your chances of quitting for good. Visit www.makesmokinghistory.org/quit-now to learn more.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DANGERS OF E-CIGARETTES?

Learn more about e-cigarettes and tobacco laws in Massachusetts by visiting www.massgeneralforchildren.org/e-cigarettes.



A vape pen with a black cartridge.

A note for your parents...

You should set clear rules against and consequences for trying e-cigarettes (also called vape pens) and other tobacco products. Tell your teen where you stand with trying all types of tobacco products. Research shows that teens are more likely to stay away from tobacco products if parents say they don't approve of trying them.

E-cigarettes are popular with teens. They are easy to get online and in stores. They also come in flavors that teens like, such as gummy bear or bubble gum. E-cigarettes are just another form of smoking.

If you smoke, it's never too late to quit. There are many resources, including doctors who can help you come up with ways to quit. There is also 1-800-QUIT-NOW, a free quit line, or the SmokefreeTXT program. Text QUIT to IQUIT.



A vape pen with a white cartridge.

Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine

Mass General Hospital for Children
55 Fruit Street, Suite 6D
Boston, MA 02114

www.massgeneralforchildren.org/adolescent

For more information please call

617-643-1201