

E-CIGARETTES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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E-cigarettes are devices that produce a nicotine-containing vapor that is inhaled. The vapor is designed to look like regular cigarette smoke, but does not produce an odor. For this reason it is sometimes called vaping. Many devices resemble cigarettes, pipes and cigars. They have been legal in the United States since 2006.

WHAT'S INSIDE AN E-CIGARETTE?

- E-cigarettes contain a tank filled with a nicotine-containing fluid.
- A heating element heats the fluid and turns it into a vapor.
- The user activates the device with a button that causes the device to make the aerosol.
- They contain a battery that is either disposable or rechargeable.

BENEFITS:

- E-cigarettes may help people who already smoke quit or cut down on the number of tobacco cigarettes they use.
- The safety of e-cigarettes has not been proven as e-cigarettes haven't existed long enough to study the long-term harms and benefits.

HARMS:

- E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is a very addictive chemical. It is especially addictive in adolescents.
- Nicotine harms normal brain development from birth through the mid-twenties. Nicotine use during this period can cause permanent problems with attention, mood, learning and addiction.
- Even though nicotine may feel relaxing while it is smoked, it contributes to the body's overall stress level.
- E-cigarettes contain many other chemicals that are known to cause cancer and other permanent lung damage. Some of these chemicals include flavorings such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to bronchiolitis obliterans (also called "popcorn lung").
- The aerosol from e-cigarettes can also harm people who are around users.
- The liquid used for e-cigarettes can cause acute poisoning when it is swallowed or spilled on the skin. It has caused severe illness and even death in children who got into it by accident.
- E-cigarettes are not safe for pregnant women.

BOTTOM LINE:

- E-cigarettes are not safe for youth, young adults or pregnant women.
- They may help adult smokers quit using regular cigarettes, which are probably more harmful than e-cigarettes.
- You should speak with your physician if you have questions about the medical benefits or harms of e-cigarettes.

SOURCE(S):

The American Academy of Pediatrics,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov