

Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), more commonly known as e-cigarettes, are growing in popularity among adults as well as youth. Largely unregulated, heavily marketed and easily accessible, these products may entice young people to try tobacco and lead to long term tobacco use.

E-Cigarettes: What are they?

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that heat a nicotine-containing liquid, creating an aerosol that the user inhales and then breathes out, simulating the act of smoking. The liquid includes flavorings, such as fruit or candy flavors (e.g. cotton candy), that may be especially appealing to youth.

E-cigarettes come in many forms, some disposable, some reusable. They most often resemble cigarettes, cigars or pipes, but some models look like other items such as pens, so that people can use them discretely.

Other names for e-cigarettes include: e-cigs, hookah-pens, vapes, or vape-pens.

Common Misconceptions about E-Cigarettes:

Myth: E-cigarettes are a safe alternative to smoking tobacco.

Reality: While e-cigarettes do not produce tobacco smoke, they still contain nicotine and other chemicals, including carcinogens, known to be toxic to humans. The health effects of these products have not yet been thoroughly studied.

Myth: E-cigarettes can help people to quit smoking.

Reality: There is little scientific evidence to support this claim, and e-cigarettes are not approved as quit-smoking aids. Instead, many people end up using both conventional and e-tobacco products.

Myth: E-cigarette users breathe out harmless water vapor.

Reality: E-cigarette users inhale and exhale an aerosol that contains nicotine, ultrafine particles that may lodge in the lungs, and low levels of chemicals known to cause cancer. People who are near the e-cigarette user are getting a “secondhand” exposure to these toxins.

Health Concerns and Risks:

- E-cigarettes may serve a gateway product for youth who have never smoked to try other tobacco products such as smoking cigarettes.
- Use of e-cigarettes to “vape” other harmful or illegal substances, such as marijuana or hashish has been reported.
- Young children have been poisoned by ingesting the flavored e-cigarette refill liquid. Reported poisonings have increased ten-fold since 2011.

Preventing E-cigarette Use among Youth:

- Enforce Rhode Island law which prohibits the sale of e-cigarettes to children under the age of 18.
- Through prevention campaigns and media advocacy, educate youth & adults to counter misconceptions about e-cigarettes.
- Advocate for the expansion of workplace, municipal, state, and school “clean indoor air” policies and laws to include e-cigarettes and other ENDS products.
- Support legislation and regulations (federal, state and local) defining e-cigarettes and other ENDS as tobacco products. This will ensure that they are subject to clean indoor air laws, marketing restrictions, labeling standards, and other regulations governing traditional tobacco products.

For More Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/youth/e-cigarettes/>

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/tobacco_unfiltered/tag/e-cigarettes

FDA proposed regulation of e-cigarettes

<http://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/Labeling/ucm388395.htm>

Content Sources:

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World Health Organization, 2013. *E-Cigarettes Pose Risks*.

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