

Electronic Cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes (E-cigs) are also referred to as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). They are also known as noncombustible tobacco products. They are widely advertised as useful tools that can be used for smoking cessation therapy. These E-cigs are known for their ability to deliver nicotine rapidly. They are created to look, feel and taste like a conventional cigarette. The E-cig comprises a power source and a heating element. A solvent containing propylene glycol and glycerin is vaporized and an aerosol is generated for the user to inhale. The liquid also contains nicotine, flavorings and other additives. These can vary from product to product.

E-cigs are currently being promoted as tools to cope with actual cigarette smoking cessation. There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that when E-cigs are combined with behavioral therapy, the results of tobacco cessation are impressive when compared to nicotine replacement. It has also been shown that E-cigs containing nicotine are much more effective than E-cigs that do not contain nicotine.

The downside of E-cigs is that it may be used as a gateway drug which is defined as “a habit-forming drug that can lead to the use of other more powerful addicting drugs.”

Within many adolescent populations, E-cigs have been found to encourage the use of traditional, conventional cigarettes. ‘Vaping’ is a colloquial term used to refer to the use of E-cigs. Both adolescents and adults have been found to indulge in ‘vaping’, even though many of them have never ever smoked a traditional cigarette before. Recent evidence now demonstrates that users of E-cigs often progress to usage of traditional cigarettes. The side effects of tobacco smoking and tobacco usage are well known and are well documented. Since E-cigs and vaping are relatively new, their side effects can only be determined after a considerable period of time. Furthermore given the wide variety of flavorings and nicotine content that will also mean that the side effects can vary from brand to brand. Most of the side effects of ENDS are reported in pulmonary medicine.

The typical timeline of carcinogenesis includes the continued use of tobacco over many years. Given the fact that ENDS have been in the marketplace for a relatively short duration, their side effects are yet to be determined.

Users who suffer from high nicotine dependence run the risk of being dual users. Some advertisements state that their products are nicotine free when in fact it has found that they do contain nicotine. This in turn leads to the person becoming a dual user.

The American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery’s position statement advises physicians to educate and advise their patients against dual use of traditional cigarettes and ENDS because such behavioral patterns will worsen by increasing addiction.

In conclusion, ENDS (E-cigs) were created to help in actual tobacco cessation which should be coupled with behavioral changes.

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