
E-CIGARETTE BRIEFING FOR CLINICIANS.

Statement on e-cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes, also known as vapes, allow the user to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than tobacco smoke. They work by heating a solution (E-liquid) that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and or vegetable glycerine and flavourings. Electronic cigarettes are not completely risk free but are substantially less harmful than tobacco. Based on an assessment of available evidence Public Health England (2018) estimates the risk reduction to be at least 95%.

What is the suggested advice when a patient wants to start using an e-cigarette?

E-cigarettes are a useful tool to help quit smoking and can be more effective with the support of Stop Smoking Services and NRT. Please ensure that behavioural support is offered either through general practice, pharmacy or a referral to Smokefree Norfolk at 0800 0854113.

E-cigarettes cannot be provided on prescription, but it is advised that patients should purchase e-cigarettes from a reputable provider who should offer a consultation and advice on the most appropriate vaping device and E-liquid.

FAQ's

Are e-cigarettes safe to use?

Electronic cigarettes are not completely risk free, however based on an assessment of the available international peer-reviewed evidence Public Health England and the Royal College of Physicians estimate that the risk reduction is around 95%.

Who can use e-cigarettes?

It is recommended that only current smokers who wish to quit should consider using e-cigarettes. This includes pregnant smokers, but Public Health England recommend that the first treatment option should always be NRT and behavioural support from either a GP or pharmacy stop-smoking advisor or Smokefree Norfolk.

Is there any carbon monoxide in e-cigarettes?

No. Electronic cigarettes do not contain carbon monoxide (CO) or many of the other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes.

Are there any risks to bystanders?

Unlike tobacco smoke which produces high amounts of harmful second-hand smoke, there is no evidence which shows any harm to others from e-cigarette vapour. The vapour that is produced from the e-cigarette is mainly water vapour with traces of chemicals.

What are 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, **nicotine is relatively harmless.**

Are there any recommended brands of e-cigarettes to use?

There are currently no electronic cigarettes with a medicinal licence available, meaning they cannot be prescribed and no specific brand or product can be recommended. Specialist retailers and internet forums can provide more information about different types of electronic cigarettes and how best to use them.

Additional information and resources:

- Public Health England, Health matters: stopping smoking-what works? September 2018. Online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-stopping-smoking-what-works/health-matters-stopping-smoking-what-works>
- BMA, statement on e-cigarettes (includes information on what doctors should say to patients). Online at <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/policy-and-research/public-and-population-health/tobacco/e-cigarettes>
- Royal College of Physicians, nicotine without smoke: tobacco harm reduction. Online at <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/nicotine-without-smoke-tobacco-harm-reduction-0>
- Royal College of GPs, e-cigarettes non-combustible inhaled tobacco products position statement. Online at <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/e-cigarettes-non-combustible-inhaled-tobacco-products.aspx>
- the National Centre for smoking cessation and training (NCSCT), online training module on e-cigarettes for healthcare professionals. Online at http://elearning.ncsct.co.uk/e_cigarettes-stage_1
- Cancer Research UK, e-cigarettes statement. Online at https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/awareness-and-prevention/e-cigarette-hub-information-for-health-professionals/e-cigarette-statement?_ad=sd=find.cancerresearchuk.org.1536051728360&_ad_ca=so%3DGoogle%26me%3Dorganic%26ca%3D%28not%2520set%29%26co%3D%28not%2520set%29%26ke%3D%28not%2520set%29.1536051728360&_ad_cw=1536050883633.1536051728360&_ad_id=0a4100ca-3b5f-4cd7-b972-0e1cd4f7bb4e.1534935007.3.1536051721.1534935261.4030c622-cd87-4a15-a4a6-52cf81610aed.1536051728360&_ga=2.62535020.1333678868.1536050875-935201599.1502276352
- NICE guideline (NG 92) stop smoking interventions and services. Online at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng92/chapter/Recommendations#advice-on-ecigarettes>