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Plain Language Summary Title: Electronic Cigarettes (E-Cigs, E-Cigarettes) Patient Education

Plain Language Summary:

What are E-Cigarettes?

Electronic Cigarettes are becoming more popular in the U.S. They consist of three parts. The first part is a plastic tube that looks like a normal cig. The second is liquid nicotine holder. Lastly, E-Cigs have a small part that gets really hot and turns liquid nicotine into a gas. This gas is breathed in just like normal cigs. Nicotine is the addictive part of cigs. People that use these take in nicotine without actually smoking. The nicotine is usually refillable and comes in many flavors, such as mint.

Why do people use E-Cigarettes?

Most people use E-Cigs to quit smoking. In fact, 65% of people say they use E-Cigs for smoking cessation. Producers of these products know this and offer them at different strengths of nicotine. This tactic mimics other nicotine products used to quit smoking. Also, retailers market them as having fewer toxins than normal cigarettes. Therefore, people think that E-Cigs are safer than cigarettes. This “green” image tends to attract younger people. Lastly, another major reason people use E-Cigs is to save money. Many sites pay users money to recruit new users.

Are E-Cigarettes safe?

Makers of E-Cigs claim that there are fewer toxins than normal cigs. This may be true, but no solid research has been done to prove/disprove this statement. The US FDA showed that there are unwanted chemicals in E-Cigs. A few studies show that the amount of nicotine that gets released with each puff is not always the same. This is concerning for lawmakers and for people trying to quit smoking. The liquid nicotine is also a potential hazard because it is refillable. Nicotine can be absorbed into the body right through the skin. If the refill vial is spilled, then children might be at risk for an overdose just by getting it on their skin. Also, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand gas that is given off may be harmful to other people.

Can I get a prescription for E-Cigarettes to quit smoking? Do they work?

There is some evidence that E-Cigs help decrease the urge to smoke. And although it seems like they *could* work for quitting, there has not been any proof that shows long-term quit rates. Also, E-Cigs have not been FDA-approved and your doctor cannot prescribe them. There are many questions regarding the safety and effectiveness of E-Cigs and they are not available for medical use. Also, many doctors think that E-Cigs may get people trying to quit to start smoking again.

Well, can I still use E-Cigarettes if I want to? Can I use them in public places?

There was an FDA ban placed in 2009, but this is being fought in court. At this moment, people can still purchase E-Cigs, but this can change quickly. E-Cigs have already been banned in a few countries because they have not been well studied. There are already strong efforts to apply the same anti-smoking laws to E-Cigs. This is being done on a state-by-state basis, but could be mandated nationwide.

What is the bottom line?

Doctors who are experts in tobacco strongly discourage the use of E-Cigs. There are too many unknown aspects surrounding their use. Right now, these recommendations are based on opinion, but may change or be confirmed by thorough research. People looking to quit should talk to their doctor about safe and effective ways of smoking cessation.

#### Additional Resources

We do not currently recommend online resources for E-Cigarettes as they are commercial sites with a vested financial interest.

For more information about smoking cessation, go to [www.quitsmoke.gov](http://www.quitsmoke.gov)

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Electronic, Cigarettes, Smoking, E-Cigarettes, Quitting

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