

# E-CIGARETTES AND VAPING

Smoking and secondhand smoke kill more than a half million people a year, making smoking the most preventable cause of death in the nation since 1964, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking causes one in five deaths a year and approximately \$150 billion a year in lost productivity from sickness and premature death.

## E-CIGARETTES AND VAPING

According to the National Health Interview Survey, the prevalence of current cigarette smoking among U.S. adults declined from 24.7 percent in 1997 to 16.8 percent in 2014. Proponents of e-cigarettes believe this is correlated with electronic cigarette use, and further report that 85 percent of the 2 million former smokers who quit in the past five years report using e-cigarettes.

Does this actually mean that cigarette smokers who turn to e-cigarettes are truly “former smokers”? Not according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which reports that e-cigarettes are not safe as a method of quitting tobacco. There is still a lot we do not know about the long-term effects of e-cigarette use. However, we do know that e-liquids are not just harmless water vapor. Every e-liquid emits nicotine, which is the addictive substance in every form of tobacco. Even e-liquids that are labeled as having zero milligrams of nicotine are still known to have traces. They are also known to contain heavy metals, ultrafine particulates, propylene glycol or glycerin, and cancer-causing agents like acrolein. The flavorings might be marketed as safe because they meet the FDA definition of “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS). However, GRAS status applies to additives for use in foods, not for inhalation. The health effects of inhaling these substances are currently unknown.

Furthermore, the California Department of Public Health identified at least 10 potentially toxic compounds that are known to cause birth defects and cancer that can be found in e-cigarettes. They also found that people who are passively exposed to e-cigarette aerosol absorb nicotine at levels comparable to those absorbed by people who are exposed to secondhand smoke.

## FDA-APPROVED QUIT METHODS: PREPARING TO BE NICOTINE-FREE

FDA-approved methods of quitting include over-the-counter medications, also known as nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs), such as the nicotine patch, gum, or lozenges. These products do not contain the toxins found in cigarettes and deliver a much lower dose of nicotine (one-third to one-half the amount) than that found in a normal cigarette. Using any NRT option will double your chance of quitting by lessening the urge to smoke and decreasing withdrawal symptoms, while gradually reducing intake in a safe way that is more effective than smoking less or using an e-cigarette. Combine the use of an NRT with the support of a specially trained coach, and your chance of quitting increases to six times that of those who quit cold turkey or without support.

Speak to your doctor about what quit method might be the best for you. Then decide if this is the right time to try and quit, and select a quit date. Even if you've tried before, you can still quit. In fact, most smokers make several attempts to quit before they're able to quit for good.

## BE NICOTINE-FREE

You have many things to consider as you begin your journey toward living a tobacco-free lifestyle. Think about the reasons why you want to quit — not the reasons that other people may have for you. Get the support of family, friends, and co-workers. Have a plan for coping with each of the triggers you face every day (triggers are people, places, activities, and feelings you associate with smoking). Consider writing down your plan and how you will cope with each trigger. On your quit day, remove all your cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car, and workplace. In addition, consider enlisting the support of a wellness coach. By calling and speaking to a coach, you'll get help setting realistic goals, accessing resources such as NRTs, and solving problems and overcoming barriers during the process of quitting.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For support from a registered nurse or wellness coach or to ask questions, please call a Blues On Call<sup>SM</sup> health coach at **1-888-BLUE-428**.

Log in to the member website listed on the back of your member ID card.

- Click on the **Wellness** tab.
- Click on **Additional Resources** on the left.
- Click on **Health Topics** under **WebMD health information** to search health topics or use the medical encyclopedia to review health issues you want to know more about.

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