
News Release

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For Immediate Release

Mayo Clinic Experts: What Should You Know About E-cigarettes?

Expert panel will discuss e-cigarettes and their impact on health at an upcoming press conference

ROCHESTER, Minn. — E-cigarettes are becoming increasingly popular and widely available as the use of regular cigarettes drops. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that e-cigarette use by children doubled from 2011 and 2012. The health effects of e-cigarettes have not been effectively studied and the ingredients have little or no regulation. Mayo Clinic's Nicotine Dependence Center experts are available to discuss what people should know before trying e-cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes, often called e-cigarettes, are battery-operated devices that provide inhaled doses of a vaporized solution of either propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin along with liquid nicotine. An atomizer heats the solution into a vapor that can be inhaled. The process, referred to as “vaping,” creates a vapor cloud that resembles cigarette smoke. Some liquids contain flavoring, making them more appealing to users.

“As of right now, there is no long-term safety data showing the impact of repeated inhalation of propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin on lung tissue,” cautions Jon Ebbert, M.D., associate director at Mayo Clinic’s Nicotine Dependence Center. “There is some short-term data suggesting that e-cigarettes may cause airway irritation, but until we have long-term safety data, we are not recommending e-cigarettes for use among cigarette smokers to help people stop smoking.”

So, what is known about electronic cigarettes?

- Manufacturers claim that electronic cigarettes are a safe alternative to conventional cigarettes.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has questioned the safety of these products.
- FDA analysis of two popular brands found variable amounts of nicotine and traces of toxic chemicals, including known cancer-causing substances (carcinogens).

- The FDA has issued a warning about potential health risks associated with electronic cigarettes, but is not yet regulating their use or standards of manufacture.

“It’s an amazing thing to watch a new product like that just kind of appear. There’s no quality control,” says Richard Hurt, M.D., director of Mayo Clinic’s Nicotine Dependence Center. “Many of them are manufactured in China under no control conditions, so the story is yet to be completely told.”

Mayo Clinic’s Nicotine Dependence Center offers FDA-approved medications and evidence-based care that is safe and effective in helping people quit smoking.

The American Association for Cancer Research(AACR) will host a press conference about e-cigarettes and their health effects on Tuesday, Oct. 29 at 9:30 a.m. ET, at the 12th Annual AACR International Conference on Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research, held Oct. 27-30 in National Harbor, Md. Scott Leischow, Ph.D., co-lead, Cancer Prevention and Control Program, Mayo Clinic, Scottsdale, Ariz., will join other experts for a discussion about existing scientific research on e-cigarettes and their impact on health, as well as the need for additional research that can inform effective cancer prevention strategies, public health messages, and regulatory activities.

The press conference will be held in the Camellia Room at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Md. Reporters who cannot attend the press conference in person can join by telephone: 800-446-2782 (toll-free).

To schedule an interview with a nicotine dependence expert, please contact Kelley Luckstein at 507-284-5005 or newsbureau@mayo.edu.

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