E-cigarettes (vapes) explained

NHS guidance recommends e-cigarettes (also known as vapes) to people who find it hard to quit smoking using usual methods. E-cigarettes can also be used to reduce the amount of tobacco you consume.
How e-cigarettes work
E-cigarettes allow you to inhale nicotine in a vapour rather than smoke. They work by heating a solution (e-liquid) that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerine, and flavourings. Using an e-cigarette is called vaping.

There are many different types of e-cigarettes. Find further information on pages 4 and 5.

Benefits experienced when using an e-cigarette instead of smoking tobacco products
• E-cigarettes are 95% less harmful to health than tobacco. They don’t contain tar or produce carbon monoxide, two of the many damaging ingredients in cigarette smoke.
• Exposure to second hand smoke is harmful to health. There is no evidence that vaping causes harm to other people around you because what is released is just water vapour.
• E-cigarettes can help you to manage your nicotine cravings. Many models allow you to change the e-liquid so you can tailor the nicotine dose to your individual need.
• A major UK clinical trial in 2019 found that, when combined with expert face-to-face support, people who used e-cigarettes to quit smoking were twice as likely to succeed as people who used other nicotine replacement products, such as patches or gum.
• The 2019 trial also found that 18% of participants using e-cigarettes were still smoke free after one year.
• People who never thought they could quit smoking manage to achieve this when using an e-cigarette. Some users report that the experience of using an e-cigarette more is enjoyable than smoking tobacco.
• E-cigarettes can be more effective in helping with tobacco withdrawal symptoms than nicotine replacement therapy.
• Using an e-cigarette can save you money compared with smoking conventional cigarettes.
Safety of e-cigarettes

There is a comprehensive system of regulation in the UK. It includes minimum standards of safety and quality, detailed notification of ingredients and labelling requirements.

E-cigarettes provide a lower risk of fire compared with conventional cigarettes, which are the second highest cause of house fires in the UK each year. As with other electrical products, e-cigarettes must be used safely.

To minimise the risk of fire caused by e-cigarettes:
• always use the correct charger for the device
• don’t leave an e-cigarette charging unattended or overnight
• don’t carry an e-cigarette in a pocket next to coins or keys
• always buy e-cigarette products from a reputable retailer to make sure they are compliant with UK safety regulations

The next step

If you make the decision to use an e-cigarette, it is important to choose the right strength of nicotine e-liquid to satisfy your needs. Devices that deliver nicotine more effectively and quickly are likely to give you a better chance of quitting smoking.

We recommend that you contact your local stop smoking service or speak with your local e-cigarette (vape) retailer for advice.

Find your local stop smoking service via www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking

If you do not have access to the internet, ask your NHS clinician to refer you to your local stop smoking service.
The Tobacco Dependence Team at King’s College Hospital is available to offer advice and support. Contact them via:
Tel: 020 3299 2600
Email: kch-tr.tobaccodependenceteam@nhs.net

Types of e-cigarettes that are available

Cig-a-likes
Features: Similar look to tobacco cigarettes. Small batteries. Disposable or rechargeable.
Benefits: Easy to use, useful as a first step away from smoking cigarettes. Limitations: Less effective than more sophisticated types of e-cigarettes.

Vape pens
Features: Shaped like a pen or small tube. Transparent tank to store e-liquid.

Mods
Benefits: Longer lasting rechargeable batteries. Design allows for more modifications and substitution of individual components.
Pod systems
Features: Compact rechargeable devices, often shaped like a USB stick. Operate with pre-filled or refillable e-liquid pods.
Benefits: They are simple to use and to maintain.

Sources
• Professor Peter Hajek and Tower Hamlets Stop Smoking Service
• Using e-cigarettes to stop smoking - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
• Randomized Trial of E-Cigarettes versus Nicotine Replacement Therapy, Hajek, Peter, et al 2019
The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

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Tel: **020 3299 3601**
Email: **kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net**

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If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on **020 3299 1844**.