

E-Cigarettes Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1 *Are e-cigarettes a healthy option?*

No. The inhaled aerosol contains a mix of toxic gases and tiny particles known to cause lung and eye irritation,¹ cancer,² and destroy cells.³ Nicotine from e-cigarette aerosol is addictive, increases the heart rate, has variable effects on blood pressure, and can contribute to hardening of the arteries.⁴ The *Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS)* designation for many of the flavors and some of the chemicals means only that they are safe to eat, NOT to inhale.⁵

Q.2 *Is secondhand e-cigarette “vapor” harmless?*

No. E-cigarettes emit a toxic aerosol, not water vapor despite claims by retailers and marketers. E-cigarettes pollute the air with tiny particles and gases known to cause lung disease^{3,6,7} and contribute to heart disease.⁸⁻¹² Short term aerosol exposure can cause eye, throat, and airway irritation.¹³ Children exposed to e-cigarette aerosol long-term can develop asthma, colds, and eczema.¹⁴ Multiple studies show that non-smokers passively absorb nicotine from e-cigarettes.¹⁵⁻¹⁷

Q.3 *Are e-cigarettes less harmful to bystanders than traditional cigarettes?*

Not necessarily. Air pollution measured at a recent e-cigarette event was higher than measurements in cafes and bars that allowed cigarette smoking.¹⁸ Additionally, according to the World Health Organization the level of some metals in secondhand aerosol is higher than the level of metals in secondhand cigarette smoke.¹⁹

Q.4 *I have heard conflicting reports, both claiming to be scientific. Which do I believe?*

The majority of researchers agree that e-cigarettes can be harmful to both e-smokers and bystanders and that more research is warranted. Consumers must be aware of “studies” published or sponsored by companies with competing interests in the tobacco and/or e-cigarette industry²⁰ as well as studies not replicated or validated by a peer-review process.²¹ Many reputable health organizations support validated research recommending regulations prohibiting e-cigarette use inside all workplaces.²²

Q.5 *Can e-cigarettes help smokers quit smoking?*

E-cigarettes are not an FDA-approved quit aid nor are they recommended as a smoking cessation method by the U.S. Preventive Task Force, CDC, or other scientists.²³⁻²⁵ In fact, a recent study shows that smokers who use e-cigarettes are significantly less likely to quit smoking than smokers who do not use e-cigarettes.²⁶

Q.6 *Will allowing e-cigarette use indoors inspire others to switch or stop smoking?*

No. The majority of current adult e-cigarette users in 2012-2013 were *dual users*, meaning they also smoke traditional cigarettes.²⁷ Using e-cigarettes to “cut down smoking” will not improve health or longevity.²⁸ An international study revealed that 80% of e-cigarette users admitted using them in smoke-free zones only to get around smoke-free laws.²⁹

Q.7 *How many youth use e-cigarettes?*

Between 2011 and 2015, there was an astonishing 900% increase in youth use of e-cigarettes in the U.S.³⁰ Electronic cigarette use by youth in 2015 exceeded use of traditional cigarettes for the second year in a row.³¹ In Kentucky, 41.7% of high schoolers and 21.8% of middle schoolers reported ever using an e-cigarette in 2015.³² Many of the thousands of flavors in e-cigarettes appeal to young people (i.e. bubble gum, watermelon).³³ Youth who have used e-cigarettes but have never smoked are nearly twice as likely to intend to smoke regular cigarettes.³⁴ Even youth and young adults *who did not intend to smoke traditional cigarettes* progressed to smoking, demonstrating the potential for a new population of cigarette smokers from those not previously at risk.³⁵

Q.8 *What are the effects of e-cigarette use on youth?*

Youth and young adults who use e-cigarettes could experience permanent effects of nicotine on the brain such as lowered impulse control, mood disorders, and problems with attention and learning.^{30,36} The 2016 Surgeon General's Report emphasizes that brain development continues into young adulthood, until about age 25.³⁰ Youth also are at high risk for addiction and may succumb to dual use and life-long nicotine dependence.³⁷

Q.9 *Do all workers in vape shops use e-cigarettes?*

No. Not all vape shop workers use e-cigarettes, nor do they always have access to alternative smoke-free employment options. Workers have the right to breathe clean air and should *never* have to choose between their health and a paycheck.

Q.10 *How can I protect myself and my loved ones from exposure to e-cigarette aerosol?*

Smoke-free policies are the best way to protect individuals from exposure to secondhand aerosol and smoke. All electronic smoking devices should be included in smoke-free policies because they pollute the air. Everyone has the right to breathe clean air in their workplace and public places.

Q.11 *Should vape shops be exempt from smoke-free laws so that customers can test e-cigarettes indoors?*

No. Exemptions leave workers and bystanders unprotected from secondhand aerosol. Exemptions also create confusion about where e-cigarettes and conventional tobacco products are allowed, which can make enforcement of smoke-free laws a challenge.

Q.12 *What are other governments doing about e-cigarettes?*

More than 500 local governments across the U.S. prohibit e-cigarette use in their smoke-free laws including many in Kentucky. Kentucky prohibits the use of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, on all properties used by the Executive Branch of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

For an up-to-date list of U.S. laws related to e-cigarettes: <http://www.no smoke.org/pdf/ecigslaws.pdf>

Q.13 *Does the inclusion of e-cigarettes in smoke-free laws violate business owners' property rights?*

No. Smoke-free laws that include e-cigarettes protect the health of the general public and the right to breathe clean air while at work. Private business owners have the responsibility to provide a clean and safe environment for workers and patrons.

Q.14 *Do local governments have the authority to enact smoke-free laws?*

Yes. In 2004, the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled local governments have the "power and manifest duty" to protect and promote the health of the public. Governments have the ethical obligation to protect the rights of the many over the convenience of a few.³⁸

BOTTOM LINE: E-cigarettes pollute the air and should be included in all smoke- and tobacco-free policies.

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