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EPIC WELLNEWS

ARE E-CIGARETTES AS SAFE AS YOU THINK?

An electronic cigarette, also known as, an e-cig, or personal vapor is a battery powered vaporizer which feels similar to traditional cigarettes. Electronic cigarettes do not contain tobacco, however, they can contain nicotine. They do not produce cigarette smoke but rather an aerosol. E- cigarettes have a heating element that “atomizes a liquid solution known as e-liquid”. E-liquids are usually a mixture of propylene glycol, glycerin, nicotine, and flavorings. They come in many shapes and sizes. Many look more or less like long cigarettes; others look like cigars or pipes. E-cigarettes have been taking the world by storm over the last 10 years and manufactures have seen sales triple.

ARE E-CIGARETTES SAFE?

There is competing evidence to argue the safety and the use of using e-cigarettes as a nicotine replacement therapy. Researchers believe traditional smoking interventions are unsuccessful for a majority of smokers because the sensory and behavioral habit of smoking is not fully addressed. Also, they contend the goal of complete cessation may not be possible and not desired by smokers. Therefore the focus should be on harm reduction. Studies (non-US studies) found users of e-cigarettes were just as or slightly more successful at abstaining as compared to their counterparts who used nicotine patches.

Although it may appear that e-cigarettes are a great option compared to traditional cigarettes, the nicotine inside the cartridges is addictive. When you stop using it, you can get withdrawal symptoms including feeling irritable, depressed, restless and anxious. U.S Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has called for more guidance on e-cigarettes.

“There’ve been theories and ideas around the fact that e-cigarettes may be helpful from a harm-reduction perspective in helping people who are already on cigarettes [and who] have had trouble quitting actually get off cigarettes. If the data indeed bears that out, then I think we should absolutely embrace that and use e-cigarettes in targeted ways.”

-Dr. Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General

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Some public health industry leaders argue that e-cigarettes could be a “gateway drug,” leading nonsmokers and kids to use tobacco. Opponents believe the promotion of e-cigarettes as a safe alternative may make smoking popular again, thus attracting non-smokers and teens to start smoking. According to the Centers for Disease Control, e-cigarette use among high schoolers is double from previous years. The fruit and candy-flavored liquid solution attracts small children, who may consume the liquid. Even a tiny amount of e-liquid can be lethal to a small child. The e-cigarette cartridges often leak, and poisoning can occur through skin or eye contact. The number of poisoning cases was 1,351 in 2013, up 300 percent from the year before.

TRYING TO QUIT?

Even though e-cigarettes are gaining in popularity, there has not been enough in-depth research. This is mainly due to the fact that they are relatively new. There are no clear answers, thus leading to medical and public health industry leaders calling for more guidance on e-cigarettes especially its use as an aid for smoking cessation. Since they’re still relatively new, it will be many years before we more fully understand the medical and environmental effects of vapor cigarettes. What, if any, long-term health consequences do they pose? In the long-term, are vapor cigarettes truly safer than traditional ones? As the technology develops, more extensive studies will provide

a better picture of both the medical and environmental effects of vapor cigarettes. There are many available resources and options for smokers who want to quit.

RESOURCES TO QUIT SMOKING

smokefree.gov: Information about a wide range of topics related to quitting. Includes telephone quit lines and text messaging services.

American Lung Association: Offers resources to help smokers figure out their reason for quitting and then take the big step of quitting for good. Freedom From Smoking Program.

American Cancer Society: Answers questions you may have during the planning process (why is it so hard to quit, how does smoking affect your health, nicotine replacement therapy. Quit Lines: 1-800-QUIT-NOW is a free, phone-based service with educational materials, coaches, a quit plan, and referrals to local resources to help you quit tobacco use.

EPIC’s WELLQUIT: For companies that are already a smoke free campus or will become one in the near future. Our WellQUIT program uses a proven approach of combining several interventions to increase chances for success. Providing skills training along with providing social support and the use of nicotine replacement therapy provides participants with the tools and resources needed to make this often difficult, but extremely rewarding lifestyle change.