

TOBACCO
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What the Heck is an E-Cigarette?!

E-cigarettes, vape juice, JUULs– oh my!

It seems that techy-looking electronic cigarettes overtook the tobacco product market overnight. What are they? What do we know about their effects on health?

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E-cigs, vapes, mods, JUULs, electronic nicotine delivery systems, cigalikes– this type of tobacco product goes by many names. What makes these products so popular?

How Do They Work?



Call them what names you want, they all function the same: a battery powers a chemical reaction that turns a liquid mixture called an e-juice in to an aerosol that the user inhales. The “cloud” they breathe out can be large enough to perform tricks (“cloud chasing”) or barely visible.

What’s an E-Juice?



E-juices (AKA vape juices or e-liquids) are a mix of (usually) nicotine, flavoring, and other chemicals. They come in an endless array of flavors like fruit punch, crème brûlée, or even bacon. Flavors especially tempting to kids– most choose flavored products over unflavored.



It can be hard to tell the difference between candy and e-juice.

Why Should We Be Concerned?

These products are taking the world by storm and are now the #1 tobacco product among teenagers. Many teens don’t know there can be health risks involved. Many products contain nicotine, or an addictive drug found in most tobacco products. Teens exposed to nicotine are more likely to develop behavioral problems. We’re also learning teens who start with e-cigarettes are more likely to switch to traditional cigarettes...and not the other way around.

JUUL e-cigarettes are causing quite a ruckus in schools across the country. These sleek models look like USB keys and are equally discreet. They produce aerosol clouds so undetectable that a student could take a “hit” in class or in the bathroom under their teachers’ noses.

What makes electronic cigarettes particularly scary is that we *don’t know much about them*. An official from the FDA has called the e-cigarette marketplace the “wild, wild West” because regulation has been slow going. They’ve been around for the last decade, which isn’t enough time for us to know how they can affect health in the long run.



Can you tell which of these is JUUL and which is a USB key?

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E-Cigarette Myths vs. Facts

The myth: E-cigs are 95% healthier than cigarettes.

The facts: The jury's out on this one. To date, there has been no conclusive evidence to say exactly how safe they are. But keep in mind: *healthier* doesn't mean *healthy*!

E-cigs are also uniquely problematic because their batteries are known to overheat without warning and *explode*!

The myth: E-cigs don't have nicotine.

The facts: Check again! This addictive drug gives users a 'buzz' and keeps them coming back. Young users in particular may think their products don't have nicotine in them when they actually do. One e-juice pod for a JUUL, the most popular product among teens, has as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. E-cigs can be addictive!

The myth: They just release harmless water vapor.

The facts: E-cigs release a cocktail of potentially harmful chemicals! Studies have shown that they can release heavy metals, cancer-causing formaldehyde and acrolein, and more. These may cause lung and eye irritation, heart disease, birth defects, DNA damage, lung disease, and a weakened immune system.

Smokers may choose to use these electronic devices in the hopes it helps them quit smoking. Some products allow users to change the amount of nicotine in the e-juice so they can wean themselves off. Some may pick them thinking they're a safer choice.

Do They Help People Quit?

But do they really get people to quit? Like so many things about these mysterious devices, we don't have a clear answer yet— we need much more scientific research.



Nicotine replacement therapy, counseling, and prescription medication are currently the most trusted methods of quitting. Hoosiers interested in quitting can call 1(800)QUIT-NOW to get counselling and some may qualify for free nicotine replacement therapy.

How Can I Tell If My Child is Using One?

Nose Bleeds, Thirst, Mouth Sores, Coughing

Chemicals found in e-juices are used to absorb moisture and can cause dehydration. Some chemicals can also damage mouth and throat cells, causing coughing and mouth sores.

Nausea, Dizziness, Headaches

E-juices can contain large amounts of nicotine, which a young person may not be used to. A nicotine rush can make a person feel high. Nicotine is also poisonous in large amounts.

Odd Devices, Parts, Smells

E-cigarettes can look like pens, USB drives, or markers. Does that pen work like it's supposed to? Devices also use unconventional batteries, chargers, and parts. While they may not always make smoke, they can smell like mint, fruit punch, or cake.