

The Harford County Local Health Improvement Coalition Tobacco Workgroup's Policy Recommendations Regarding E-Cigarettes

With the rise in popularity of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and their ready availability, the Harford County Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) Tobacco Workgroup has drafted this position paper to help clarify its views.

WHEREAS according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- E-cigarette sales have increased from 50,000 in 2008 to 3.5 million in 2012.
- E-cigarette experimentation and recent use doubled among U.S. middle and high school students during 2011–2012, resulting in an estimated 1.78 million students having ever used e-cigarettes as of 2012.
- And an estimated 160,000 students who reported ever using e-cigarettes had never used conventional cigarettes.

The Harford County LHIC Tobacco Workgroup issues the following statement:

The Tobacco Workgroup recommends that until the regulating authorities say otherwise, e-cigarettes should be treated as other tobacco products regarding their use restriction in public places, offices, and government buildings, and be subject to the same human resource and school policies as traditional tobacco products.

E-cigarettes pose a significant public health threat not only for what is already scientifically proven about them, but equally for what is not yet known about their possible health impact. Presently e-cigarettes are unregulated by government agencies, yet are readily available at a variety of retail outlets. Aggressive marketing campaigns that often target children and young adults, and nicotine addiction and potential nicotine toxicity make this a serious public health issue.

- E-cigarettes and their liquid vials are not regulated products. Users are not assured of actual contents, and there is no guarantee that vials labeled nicotine free actually do not contain nicotine.
- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has concluded that e-cigarettes pose acute health risks and contain detectable levels of carcinogens and toxic chemicals. The carcinogenic substances diethylene glycol and nitrosamines have been found in FDA tested samples, as well as other tobacco-specific impurities that may be harmful to humans.
- Overall, 10% of students who have used e-cigarettes at least once have never smoked, thus exposing a new nonsmoking segment of young adults to the harmful effects of nicotine. E-cigarette liquids are not regulated and many contain alarming levels of nicotine, raising the concern of potential negative impact of nicotine on adolescent brain development, the long term risk for nicotine addiction, and the potential for initiation of the use of conventional cigarettes or other tobacco products.
- The e-cigarette is **not** a proven safe alternative to smoking and may pose safety risks to others.
- There is no scientific evidence that e-cigarettes help smokers quit. There are proven safe and effective nicotine replacement medications available over the counter including patches, gum and lozenges. Oral inhalers and nasal sprays can be obtained with a prescription.
- In the State of Maryland it is illegal to sell e-cigarettes to minors.

What are electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)?

The e-cigarette, also known as personal vaporizers (PV) or electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS), is a battery-powered pen sized device that simulates tobacco smoking by producing a smoke-like vapor, thus the term vaping, when referred to the use of this device. E-cigarettes generally use a heating element known as an atomizer, which vaporizes a liquid solution that is sold either with or without nicotine, and often contains chemicals and flavorings.

Concerns about E-Cigarettes

Within the last decade e-cigarettes have become a popular alternative to traditional tobacco products. Touted as a healthier choice over burned or chewed tobacco products, a method of smoking cessation, or a means of being able to enjoy a cigarette in locations where traditional smoking is prohibited, e-cigarette users are a growing demographic. Many questions remain however, including whether e-cigarettes are a safe alternative to traditional tobacco products, if there are any negative effects of secondary e-cigarette vapor exposure, whether they aid in smoking cessation, or if they encourage nonsmokers to begin smoking.

1. **According to the FDA, e-cigarettes have not been fully studied, so consumers currently don't know the potential risks of e-cigarettes when used as intended, or how much nicotine or other potentially harmful chemicals are being inhaled during use.**
2. **The e-cigarette device is not safety regulated, and there have been incidences of e-cigarette devices exploding.**
3. **There is an emerging health threat of nicotine poisoning due to the concentrated liquid nicotine used in e-cigarettes.** While nicotine has always existed in tobacco products, tobacco is so irritating to the digestive system that a person would become sick before being able to ingest enough nicotine to be severely toxic. The nicotine found in common e-cigarette vials, however, is so concentrated that a tablespoon contains enough nicotine to be lethal to a 65 lb. child.
4. **Nicotine found in e-cigarettes poses the same risk for nicotine addiction as do conventional tobacco products.** Many e-cigarette companies are making unproven health claims about their products, saying that they are safe or safer than traditional cigarettes. While e-cigarettes do not pose the traditional health risk associated with inhaling tobacco smoke, they may present their own health concerns. In 2009, the U.S. FDA conducted one limited study and found that e-cigarette solutions contained carcinogens and toxic chemicals, including some ingredients found in anti-freeze. In addition, **recent studies have shown that e-cigarettes are a source for second hand exposure to nicotine.**
5. **E-cigarettes liquid solutions are sold with scents, flavors, and packaging that can be very attractive to children and young adults.** The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids are very concerned about the increase in the marketing and sales of e-cigarettes, in particular to children. This is especially concerning due to the potential negative impact of nicotine on adolescent brain development.
6. **There is no scientific evidence that e-cigarettes can help smokers quit.** Despite e-cigarette manufacturer's claims to the contrary, use of e-cigarettes is not a proven nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). E-cigarettes do not prove an end-plan to actually quit smoking, but rather substitute one habit for another. They do not contain any of the 7 drugs approved by the FDA in combination with individual or group cessation counseling, which is the proven most effective way to help smokers quit.