E-cigarettes facts

What are electronic cigarettes?
Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes, are battery-operated products that replicate smoking behavior without the use of tobacco.

Some look like conventional cigarettes, while others appear more like an electronic device.

Some types of e-cigarettes are also marketed and sold (illegally) to deliver nicotine present in all tobacco products. These types of e-cigarette are known as ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems), and there are concerns about their safety.

How do they work?
E-cigarettes heat a replaceable cartridge that may or may not contain liquid nicotine and other chemicals. The heating process creates a mist that resembles tobacco smoke (referred to as vapour or vaping) which is inhaled by the user.

Are e-cigarettes legal to sell in Tasmania?
Yes. E-cigarettes and their cartridges can be sold in Tasmania provided the cartridges do not contain nicotine. Anyone can sell e-cigarettes (without the nicotine liquid solution).

It is a breach of the Tasmanian Poisons Act 1971 if the cartridges contain nicotine. Nicotine containing cartridges have not been evaluated for quality, safety or performance nor approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia.

Any retailer selling e-cigarette cartridges containing nicotine is breaking state and commonwealth laws.

To import or supply e-cigarettes as an aid to reducing nicotine dependence, (e.g. as a therapeutic good) then a person must become a product sponsor and make an application to the TGA. This application must include evidence of the beneficial effects of e-cigarettes.

Are they an effective smoking cessation aide?
Some people claim e-cigarettes can help people quit smoking. Several research projects are looking into their effectiveness as a cessation aide but so far no evidence exists to support this claim.

Are they safe to use?
No. Consumers should be strongly advised not to use ENDS of any kind, including e-cigarettes as they are not regulated nor has their safety been scientifically demonstrated. This includes the contents of vapour emissions.

The World Health Organization says consumers should not use e-cigarettes until they are deemed safe, effective and of acceptable quality by a national regulatory body.

In Australia, no assessment of e-cigarettes has been undertaken and therefore, the quality and safety of e-cigarettes is unknown.

Why the concern about e-cigarettes?
Tasmania has seen a dramatic rise in the marketing, availability and use of e-cigarettes. Concerns are predominantly around the nicotine content of some liquid cartridges.

It is illegal for e-cigarettes to contain nicotine. Testing of products being sold in Tasmania indicates some contain nicotine, which is a major health concern.

Recent tests in Tasmania have revealed e-cigarette liquid refills with up to 18 mg/mL, which, if consumed by a child, would lead to severe illness.
Other concerns include:

- variability in the amount and type of chemicals e-cigarettes deliver
- leaking of chemicals
- marketing with implied health benefits unsubstantiated or based on inaccurate or misleading information
- inconsistent labeling
- glamorous packaging and advertising aimed at young people, potentially encouraging new smokers
- normalisation of smoking behavior, particularly in smoke-free areas such as licensed venues
- undermining support to quit smoking
- no research exists of the long term health effects of using e-cigarettes on users or passive smoking risks to other people.

**Why is nicotine so dangerous?**

Nicotine is an addictive chemical that can be lethal in excessive amounts. High doses of nicotine can be absorbed through the skin as well by the lungs (from smoking) and the gastrointestinal tract (from swallowing).

Children, adolescents, pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with heart conditions and the elderly are particularly susceptible.

Nicotine poisoning can result in a whole range of symptoms, including abdominal cramps, agitation, changes in breathing and confusion.

If nicotine poisoning is suspected, call 000.

Scientific evidence suggests e-cigarettes containing nicotine may be dangerous because they can deliver unreliable doses.

**Are there risks for children?**

Yes. Children should not use e-cigarettes at all.

Children face a significant risk of nicotine poisoning if they consume a liquid refill containing nicotine.

A child weighing 30 kilograms, for example, would likely suffer acute nicotine poisoning and could die if they swallowed the contents of a 24 mg nicotine cartridge.

Although nicotine has a bitter taste, some e-cigarette cartridges are flavoured with fruit or confectionary that can result in them being more enticing to children.

E-cigarette cartridges also contain other potentially toxic chemicals.

For these reasons they must be kept out of the reach of young children.

As e-cigarettes are not regulated they contain no nicotine warnings.

**How is nicotine regulated?**

Nicotine is a prescribed dangerous poison under the Poisons Act, and it is an offence to manufacture, obtain, possess, sell or supply nicotine or products containing nicotine unless a permit has been issued by the relevant state or territory authority.

**Who is responsible for enforcement?**

Population Health Services’ Pharmaceutical Services Branch regulates Schedule 7 poisons, including nicotine.

**What should I do if I find nicotine-containing e-cigarettes for sale?**

Sales of e-cigarette products containing nicotine should be reported to Pharmaceutical Services Branch on 6233 2064 or email pharm.services@dhhs.tas.gov.au

**What about products purchased over the internet?**

It is an offence in Tasmania, and other states and territories, to buy nicotine products over the internet and import them. It is also an offence to obtain and possess nicotine without a permit.

Population Health Services (PHS) advises against buying nicotine-free e-cigarettes over the internet as their quality and safety has not been assessed — and they can vary in the amount and type of chemicals they deliver.

**Where can I get help to quit smoking?**

PHS encourages all smokers to quit. Smokers can get help and support to quit smoking by contacting Quitline 13 78 48, http://quittas.org.au/ or talking to their health professional.