

Electronic Cigarettes fact sheet

What are electronic cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes, are battery-operated products that replicate tobacco smoking behaviour.

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

How do they work?

E-cigarettes heat a replaceable cartridge that contains liquid with various flavouring agents, preservatives and sometimes nicotine.

The heating process creates a vapour that resembles tobacco smoke.

The inhalation of this vapour is referred to as vaping.

Are they safe to use?

In Australia, e-cigarettes have not been assessed for quality or safety so it is not known if they are safe to use. This includes vapour. We do know that e-cigarettes contain chemicals that are harmful.

E-cigarettes and the law in Tasmania

The *Public Health Act 1997* restricts the display and advertising of e-cigarettes and bans their sale to people under 18 years of age and their use in areas that are smoke free.

The *Poisons Act 1971* prescribes nicotine as a schedule 7 dangerous poison.

This means e-cigarettes and their cartridges cannot be sold in Tasmania if the cartridges contain nicotine.

Why is nicotine classed as a poison?

Nicotine is a dangerous chemical which is very addictive.

It is particularly unsafe for young people, pregnant women and unborn children.

This is why nicotine containing products such as tobacco and approved nicotine replacement therapy products are strictly regulated.

Do e-cigarettes help people wanting to quit smoking tobacco?

Some people claim e-cigarettes can help people to quit smoking.

Several research projects are looking into their effectiveness for this, but so far insufficient evidence exists to make this claim or change our policy.

Can I access e-cigarettes with nicotine to help quit smoking?

A person is not breaking Tasmanian law if they access a three month supply of nicotine imported for personal use as a therapeutic product if it has been prescribed by a medical practitioner.

However, Tasmanians are strongly advised not to do this.

The Australian medicines regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration does not support the use of e-cigarettes and has not approved any e-cigarette product as a therapeutic good.

Some products containing nicotine have been assessed and approved as a medicine for therapeutic use, such as nicotine replacement therapy products available from pharmacies.

What about products purchased over the internet?

Tasmanians are strongly advised not to buy 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.

Why the concern about e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are a concern because of:

- variability in the amount and type of chemicals e-cigarettes deliver
- leaking of chemicals
- marketing with implied benefits that are based on inaccurate or misleading information
- poor labelling

- glamorous packaging advertising aimed at young people
- potential to normalise smoking like behaviour and undermine support to quit smoking.

Globally, tobacco smoking kills more than seven million people each year.

In Tasmania, over 500 people die each year from their tobacco use.

Quitting Smoking

Tobacco users wanting to quit their addiction to nicotine should speak to their doctor or a pharmacist about the effective options available or call the Quitline on 13 78 48.

More Information

Department of Health and Human Services

Website

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth

Email tobacco.control@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Public Health Hotline – Tasmania
1800 671 738