

REDUCING THE HARM FROM COMBUSTIBLE TOBACCO USE: SWITCHING FROM SMOKING TO VAPING

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Introduction: Electronic cigarettes (EC) have been available for over a decade and their use among people who smoke has increased substantially. EC can provide nicotine to the user via an aerosol that is generated by heating a solution that typically contains propylene glycol and/or glycerol, plus flavours. More commonly this aerosol is known as vapour and the use of EC as vaping.

Approach: The objectives of this presentation are to (1) summarise the evidence regarding risks versus benefits of EC use in helping people to stop smoking; (2) provide an overview of public health concerns and discuss ways in which these might be addressed; and (3) provide practical information to enable clinicians to give advice to people who are interested in switching from smoking to vaping.

Key Findings: Data show that EC can reduce urges to smoke, help smokers reduce cigarette consumption as well as quit smoking altogether. To date, no serious health risks associated with EC use have emerged at a population level, although there are a range of animal and cell-based studies that suggest that EC use is not 'risk-free'. Studies have identified the presence of a range of toxicants present in e-liquid and vapour, but overall EC expose users to considerable lower levels toxicants and carcinogens (in range and concentration) than smoking.

Conclusions: The greatest health benefits are realised when people stop smoking completely. As the health risks of smoking are so large, a switch to vaping long-term will be associated with a risk reduction.

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