



Nicotine Controversies

Which would you rather inhale: smoke filled with nicotine, tar, carbon monoxide, and dozens of other chemical compounds *or* vaporized, FDA-approved chemicals—with nicotine and who knows what?

Howdy DNews users. Thanks for tuning in today. I'm Trace. The embattled tobacco companies formally known Big Tobacco have all but caved to the pressures of the anti-smoking movement, and yet hundreds of thousands still die every year from smoking-related diseases and cancers. Now we've got a new, young heavy-weight on the nicotine delivery system scene: the e-cigarette. But, this relatively unknown quantity might not be the savior that some are claiming.

E-cigarettes were invented by a pharmacist in China in 2003. Now, a decade later, that device is everywhere. It's marketed as a brand new way to enjoy your nicotine fix and occasionally as an alternate path to quitting smoking.

It's a simple little device containing a battery, a heating element, and nicotine liquid. They're usually called e-cigarettes or vapes, short of vaporizers. People inhale or flip a switch to activate that heating element, vaporizing the liquid and allowing the nicotine into the lungs for absorption. The ingredients of the liquid smoke inside the e-cig vary. Commonly, it's propylene glycol, an FDA-approved additive that you use in food. Also, flavors like tobacco, cherry, chocolate, mint, or menthol, and of course nicotine extract.

There's a lot of controversy around these gadgets, but they're selling with little or no regulation or control. With no long-term studies completed and many still on-going, the benefits or drawbacks of the e-cigarette are still pretty much a mystery. A recent study published in the Lancet shows e-cigarettes are just as likely to decrease smoking rates as a nicotine patch or nicotine gum, but the controversy isn't really about the benefits. It's about the lack of regulation. The FDA seized the product as it entered the US border claiming it was a drug delivery system, but the court overturned their objection, and vapes hit the shelves.

Now, according to the CDC, 1.78 million children and teens have tried e-cigarettes as of last year with that number doubling from the year before. There's no law saying vapes can't be sold to children. And so, according to the study, US students in grades six through eight are getting their hands on these nicotine vaporizers with a very small percentage of them saying that they use it once a month.

We're well away of the dangers of smoking thanks to decades-long fighting against it. At this point, it would seem to me if you smoke you know the risks, but with e-cigarettes we aren't sure. That's just not the case. A rather controversial study was done in France by a magazine called "Sixty Million Consumers" that tested ten different vape models, and they assert, depending on the model, these "safer" cigs contain nearly as much formaldehyde as a traditional cigarette. Also, they found "a significant quantity of carcinogenic molecules."

I know we're not all scientists here on the Internet, but what do you think? Do you trust e-cigarettes?