

# e-cigarette facts and myths

**MYTH:** “E-cigarettes are a healthy alternative to smoking.”

**FACT:** To date, there is no scientific evidence establishing the safety of e-cigarettes.<sup>2</sup> The vapor of some e-cigarette cartridges contains harmful substances (formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, acrolein, diethylene glycol, nickel, chromium, lead)<sup>4</sup> similar to those chemicals found in regular cigarettes.

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**MYTH:** “E-cigarettes can help people quit smoking.”

**FACT:** The efficacy of e-cigarettes as an aid for sustained smoking cessation has not been proven.<sup>2</sup>

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**MYTH:** “E-cigarettes are not marketed towards youth.”

**FACT:** Data has shown an increase in use of e-cigarettes by youth.<sup>3</sup> Public health advocates are concerned that the appealing flavors and attractive appearance of e-cigarettes will lure young people and lead them to smoke regular cigarettes.<sup>1</sup>

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**MYTH:** “It is safe to smoke e-cigarettes around others.”

**FACT:** Adverse health effects from secondhand smoke exposure cannot be excluded because the use of e-cigarettes leads to emissions of fine and ultrafine inhalable liquid particles, nicotine and cancer-causing substances into indoor air.<sup>4</sup>

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**MYTH:** “E-cigarettes don’t contain nicotine.”

**FACT:** Although e-cigarettes don’t contain tobacco, the majority *do* contain nicotine – the most addictive substance in tobacco.<sup>1</sup> Nicotine is more addictive than cocaine or heroin.<sup>5</sup>

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**MYTH:** “E-cigarettes are a socially acceptable alternative to regular cigarettes.”

**FACT:** The use of e-cigarettes models unhealthy behavior to youth. **Anything** that glamorizes smoking to youth is unacceptable.

**NOTE:** In April, 2014 the FDA announced plans to regulate some aspects of e-cigarette sales. Unfortunately, FDA plans do not yet include restricting flavorings, advertising, or Internet sales.

This information  
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1.) McDonald, Cathy, M.D., M.P.H. *E-Cigarette use is increasing-though data about risks and benefits are still scant: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW*. Nicotine-Free News. Alameda County Cessation Provider Training and Support Network Newsletter.  
2.) Thomas, L. Marye M.D.. *Informational Document Regarding Electronic Cigarettes*. 31 January 2013; E-Cigarette Task Force. Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services.  
3.) Talking Points on E-Cigarette Regulation. April 2013. Contra Costa Health Services Tobacco Prevention Project.  
4.) German Cancer Research Center (Ed.) *Electronic Cigarettes – An Overview*. Heidelberg, 2013  
5.) Blakeslee, Sandra. “Nicotine: Harder to Kick than Heroin.” *The New York Times*. 29 March 1987.