

Position Statement on E-Cigarettes

What are E-Cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are battery-powered electronic nicotine delivery systems. They have two primary purposes: to enable the inhaling of nicotine and to imitate the practice of smoking. E-cigarettes do not involve the burning of tobacco or the inhalation of its smoke, but do deliver nicotine which is derived from tobacco. It is generally agreed that they are less toxic than traditional cigarettes and, if all smokers switched to them completely, this would improve public health. It is likely that many people have quit traditional cigarettes by using e-cigarettes, but this information is mostly anecdotal.

Is There Cause for Concern?

E-cigarettes have not been proven harmless and, as a result, public health organizations and federal agencies are concerned about their risks. They are unregulated products at present, and research on their health effects is in its infancy. Quality control processes used to manufacture e-cigarettes are inconsistent and the delivery of nicotine varies significantly. E-cigarette vapor, which has not been proven safe, emits carcinogenic chemicals¹ and other toxins into the environment. The number of calls to poison centers involving e-cigarette liquids containing nicotine rose from one per month in September 2010 to 215 per month in February 2014.²

What are the Potential Harms of E-Cigarette Use?

- They could serve as a gateway for youth to nicotine addiction and tobacco use.
- They could re-normalize cigarette smoking in public perception.
- They could discourage or delay tobacco cessation by facilitating dual use.
- They could tempt former smokers return to nicotine and potentially relapse to smoking.

How Are E-Cigarettes Impacting Youth?

- Awareness of e-cigarettes among young people is very high, ranging from 89% for those ages 13-17 to 94% for young adults ages 18-21.³
- Use is also high, with 14% of those ages 13-17 and 39% of those ages 18-21 reporting having used e-cigarettes.⁴
- One study found that 20.3% of middle school students who used e-cigarettes had never smoked traditional cigarettes; thus, they served as their introduction to nicotine.⁵
- The percentage of high school students who reported ever using an e-cigarette doubled from 2011 to 2012.⁶

Does Big Tobacco Have a Stake in E-Cigarettes?

- Two years ago, the large tobacco companies hadn't made the plunge into the e-cigarette market. Today, Altria, Reynolds, and Lorillard are all deeply invested.
- E-cigarette companies aggressively promote their products to young people through celebrities, concerts, sponsorship of youth-oriented events, social media, and free samples.⁷
- E-cigarette ads appeal to kids with flavors like Cherry Crush, Peachy Keen, Gummi Bear, and Cotton Candy. These flavorings are banned in traditional cigarettes.
- Kids are exposed to e-cigarette advertisements on television and via other media. Some states have passed laws prohibiting sales to minors, but e-cigarettes are easy to purchase online.

Will the Food and Drug Administration Regulate E-Cigarettes?

On April 24, 2014 the Food and Drug Administration released a [proposed rule](#) to extend its regulatory authority to e-cigarettes and other products that meet the legal definition of a tobacco product, but are currently unregulated. If the rule becomes final, the newly deemed tobacco products would be required to meet the same standards as currently regulated tobacco products.

Under the proposed rule, makers of newly deemed tobacco products would:

- Register with the FDA and report product and ingredient listings.
- Only market new tobacco products after FDA review.
- Only make direct and implied claims of reduced risk if the FDA confirms that scientific evidence supports the claim and that marketing the product will benefit public health.
- Not distribute free samples.
- Comply with minimum age and identification restrictions to prevent sales to underage youth.
- Include health warnings.
- Prohibit sales through vending machines, unless in a facility that never admits youth.

What is Altarum Institute's Position?

In light of these concerns, Altarum Institute advocates that:

- The Food and Drug Administration move swiftly to finalize the proposed rule regulating e-cigarettes.
- All measures are taken to protect children and youth from e-cigarettes including limiting or eliminating advertising, minimum age purchase laws, educational campaigns, etc.
- Current smokers use evidence-based cessation strategies to quit including FDA-approved medications.
- States and communities prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in places where smoking is prohibited.
- Renewed efforts are undertaken to normalize nicotine-free lifestyle, working against the glamour and appeal of e-cigarettes which perpetuate the opposite.
- A national research program is undertaken to evaluate the harms of e-cigarettes, if any, to the individual and society (to inform policy decisions).

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References

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²Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "New CDC Study Finds Dramatic Increase in E-Cigarette-Related Calls to Poison Centers". *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Available here: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6313a4.htm>

³Legacy for Health. "Vaporized: E-Cigarettes, Advertising, and Youth". Available here: http://legacyforhealth.org/content/download/4542/63436/version/1/file/LEG-Vaporized-E-cig_Report-May2014.pdf

⁴Legacy for Health. "Vaporized: E-Cigarettes, Advertising, and Youth". Available here: http://legacyforhealth.org/content/download/4542/63436/version/1/file/LEG-Vaporized-E-cig_Report-May2014.pdf

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Notes from the field: electronic cigarette use among middle and high school students—United States, 2011–2012". *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2013;62:729–730. Available here: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24005229?dopt=Abstract>

⁶Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "E-Cigarette Use More Than Doubles Among U.S. Middle and High School Students From 2011–2012". *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Available here: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6235a6.htm>

⁷"Gateway to Addiction? A Survey of Popular Electronic Cigarette Manufacturers and Targeted Marketing to Youth." Available here: http://www.durbin.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve/?File_id=81d14ff7-f2f6-4856-af9d-c20c0b138f8f