

What are e-cigarettes?

- e-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid into a vapour, which is then inhaled by the user (often containing nicotine and flavourings mixed with a carrier liquid of propylene glycol or glycerin)
- some e-cigarettes are smaller and 'cigarette like', larger 2nd and 3rd generation e-cigarettes typically do not look like normal cigarettes, and have higher-powered batteries and refillable liquid reservoirs

Who uses e-cigarettes?

- use has grown rapidly: 20% of adult (age 16+) smokers in Scotland currently used an e-cigarette in 2015, 7% of ex-smokers, with negligible current use among never-smokers
- there is very little Scottish or UK data on e-cigarettes among children and young people, surveys so far have found use is mostly confined to young people who are or were smokers
- international research, mostly from the U.S, shows an increase in e-cigarette experimentation and use amongst young people over time - studies have not yet shown whether e-cigarette use leads to more young people taking up smoking of tobacco cigarettes, or the opposite

How harmful are they?

- there are no long-term studies on the health effects of e-cigarettes - analysis of the chemicals present in e-cigarette vapour finds many fewer potentially hazardous chemicals than in tobacco smoke in much lower quantities, but with significant variation between devices
- based on the limited evidence that currently exists, experts conclude that e-cigarettes are likely to be considerably less hazardous than tobacco smoking

Do e-cigarettes help people quit smoking?

- e-cigarettes can deliver nicotine to the body and newer devices seem more effective at doing this than older 'cigarette like' devices – though both seem to deliver nicotine much more slowly than smoking
- there is very little high-quality research on e-cigarettes for stopping smoking, but some studies have found 'cigarette like' e-cigarettes to be about as effective as a medicinal nicotine patch

What are the concerns around e-cigarettes?

- widespread and largely unregulated e-cigarette marketing could attract young people to e-cigarettes and on to nicotine addiction
- tobacco companies are increasingly involved in e-cigarette manufacture and sale
- the potential for e-cigarettes to 'renormalise' smoking