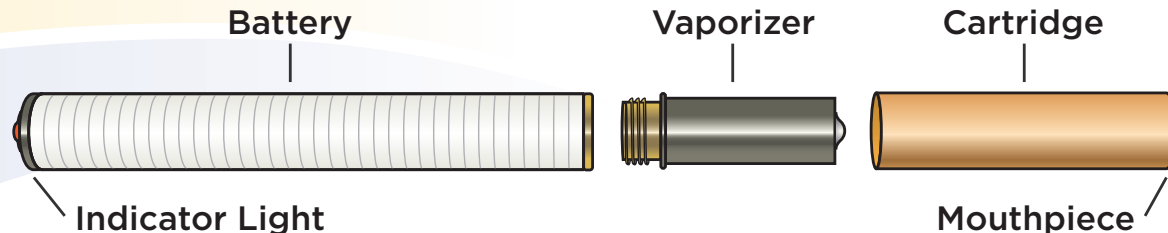


# The Electronic Cigarette



## What is an electronic cigarette or “e-cigarette”?

An e-cigarette is a device that looks like a traditional cigarette, but does not contain tobacco. It usually contains nicotine. The e-cigarette is battery-operated and vaporizes a liquid which creates a mist inhaled by the user. There is a light at one end that glows during use. The mist from the vapor and the light makes it look as though the person is smoking an actual cigarette.

## What products are in an e-cigarette?

Most cartridges contain flavoring, nicotine and other chemicals. Currently, these products are not regulated; therefore manufacturers can add a variety of chemicals to the e-cigarettes. Studies of these products have found cancer-causing chemicals and other substances that are toxic to humans. The same testing has also shown that the quality control of these products is poor. For example, some e-cigarettes are labeled the same, but have different amounts of nicotine and other chemicals in them.

## Is using the e-cigarette a good way to quit smoking?

These products are NOT approved by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) as smoking cessation devices. There are many FDA approved therapies to help someone who wants to stop smoking; the e-cigarette is not one of them. For more information about FDA approved prescription and over the counter medications, see ATS Tobacco Series pieces: “Over the Counter Medications to Help You Stop Tobacco Use” and “Prescription Medications to Help You Stop Using Tobacco.”

If you are having difficulty stopping smoking talk to your health care provider or call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) for telephone counseling and information about quitting in your state.

What you should know about products not regulated by the FDA

- Products not regulated by the FDA do not hold to the same standards of quality that regulated products do
- Harmful products can be placed in devices that are not regulated
- Without regulation, the dosage of chemicals you receive can be very high and harmful or very low and not useful

**Authors:** Tobacco Control Committee of the American Thoracic Society, Patricia Folan RN, MS, Daniel Jacobsen RN, MS, FNP-BC

**Reviewer:** Suzanne C Lareau RN, MS

### Resources:

FDA (Food and Drug Administration). *FDA and public health experts warn about electronic cigarettes [press release]*. 2009 July 22, 2009. Available from: <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm173222.htm>.

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/ScienceResearch/UCM173250.pdf> American

Legacy Foundation *Electronic Cigarettes* (2011) [www.legacyforhealth.org](http://www.legacyforhealth.org)