

## E-cigarettes and the Surrey stop smoking programme

It is estimated that there are currently 2.9 million adults in the UK using e-cigarettes and they have become the number one quitting aid<sup>1</sup>. Research shows that e-cigarettes are helping people quit smoking so it is likely customers will be coming to the pharmacy to purchase the products and looking for support. Pharmacies are well placed to recruit smokers wanting to use e-cigarettes onto their in-house stop smoking programme.

### **Are e-cigarettes safe?**

In the UK e-cigarettes are tightly regulated for safety and quality. They aren't completely risk free, but they carry a small fraction of the risk of cigarettes. E-cigarettes don't produce tar or carbon monoxide. The liquid and vapour contain some potentially harmful chemicals also found in cigarette smoke but at much lower levels<sup>2</sup>.

Public Health England's 2015 independent evidence review found that, based on the available evidence, vaping is around 95% less harmful than smoking<sup>3</sup>. The Royal College of Physicians came to a similar conclusion in its report 'Nicotine without smoke: tobacco harm reduction', published in 2016<sup>4</sup>.

The evidence on e-cigarettes continues to develop and Public Health England is monitoring it closely.

### **Can e-cigarettes be used on the Surrey stop smoking programme?**

The use of e-cigarettes as a recommended aid to stop smoking does not form part of the Public Health Agreement for smoking, but if the client wishes to use an e-cigarette, then behavioural support may be provided<sup>5</sup>. Please note, in order to be treated on the stop smoking programme, the patient must have smoked tobacco within 48 hours of coming to see the advisor. Someone who is vaping and hasn't smoked since their quit date will count as a 4-week validated quitter. Ensure you record this on PharmOutcomes.

### **Can we prescribe e-cigarettes?**

No. Only licensed stop smoking medications can be dispensed on the programme. As per NICE guidance, all stop smoking medications must be offered first line. You cannot recommend e-cigarettes as part of the client's treatment.

### **Can we recruit vapers?**

Yes. If a smoker purchases an e-cigarette from your pharmacy, tell them about your stop smoking programme and explain that the chances of quitting will increase if they receive behavioural support. Also mention the added benefit of CO monitoring.

Be aware of the regulations surrounding the sale of e-cigarettes, as it is illegal to sell them to anyone under the age of 18 years. Ask for ID if you are unsure of the age of a customer

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<sup>1</sup> Action on Smoking & Health (ASH) *Electronic cigarettes* [www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH\\_715.pdf](http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_715.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Smokefree NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/e-cigarettes>

<sup>3</sup> PHE (2015) *E-cigarettes: An evidence review* [www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-an-evidence-update](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-an-evidence-update)

<sup>4</sup> The Royal College of Physicians <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/nicotine-without-smoke-tobacco-harm-reduction-0>

<sup>5</sup> Surrey PHA for smoking cessation 2017-18

For further information on e-cigarettes:

Smokefree NHS: [www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/e-cigarettes](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/e-cigarettes)

Electronic Cigarettes: A briefing for stop smoking services:

[www.ncsct.co.uk/publication\\_electronic\\_cigarette\\_briefing.php](http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_electronic_cigarette_briefing.php)

If you have any questions or need further advice, please contact Quit 51:

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