



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Common Questions About Electronic Cigarettes and Nicotine Pouches

This resource answers common questions about electronic cigarettes and nicotine pouches. Electronic cigarettes are also called e-cigarettes, or e-cigs. It also has resources to help people quit smoking.

Common questions about e-cigs

What are some types of e-cigs?

- **Cigalikes** look and feel like regular tobacco cigarettes. They often have a glowing tip. They use small, pre-felled cartridges filled with liquid that has nicotine, flavors, and other chemicals. The battery heats up the liquid and turns it into an aerosol (vapor) or mist that you breathe in.
- **Pod mods (pod vapes)** are compact devices that often look like USB devices. They use pre-filled pods or pods you can refill. One common type of pod mod is a JUUL.
- **Vape pens** are slightly larger devices shaped like a

cylinder. They have a tank that you can refill. They come in many flavors. Some have settings you can adjust.

- **Box mods** are custom, box-shaped devices. They have larger batteries and tanks. Box mods produce larger vapor clouds.
- **Disposables** are pre-filled, single-use devices. They get thrown away once the liquid runs out or the battery dies.

Are e-cigs safe to use?

Using e-cigs (also called vaping) does not fill your lungs with the amounts of harmful smoke like cigarettes do. But they still have nicotine, flavors, and other chemicals in them. Vapors in e-cigarettes are made up of water and chemicals. These can cause breathing problems in some people.

We don't yet know the long-term health risks of using e-cigs. More research on the safety of e-cigs is needed.

Are the flavors in e-cigs safe to use?

No, many e-cigarette flavors have chemicals that can be dangerous when inhaled. Heating these flavorings creates toxic chemicals. Inhaling them can cause inflammation and cell damage.

Certain flavorings can irritate or damage the lungs. Examples include cinnamon and vanilla, among others.

Some e-liquids have chemicals linked to serious and permanent lung disease.

Is using an e-cigarette with Vitamin E acetate safe?

No, using an e-cigarette with Vitamin E acetate is not safe. Breathing in Vitamin E acetate may cause breathing problems. This chemical can cause e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury (EVALI).

Don't add Vitamin E acetate or any other substances to e-cigs.

Can e-cigs help people quit smoking?

Some studies show e-cigs can help some people get off regular cigarettes. Certain studies show people use regular and e-cigs together long-term. Other studies show switching leads to long-term use of e-cigs. This is very true with high nicotine brands or brands that add salts.

We don't know about long-term health use safety of these devices, especially for people with cancer. More research is needed. These devices are not FDA-approved quitting medicines. We recommend using safe and proven methods, such as nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, or other cessation medicines. Cessation medicines are medicines to help you quit smoking.

Some people use e-cigs to:

- Reduce the amount of harmful chemicals in regular cigarette smoke.
- Help manage nicotine withdrawal cravings.
- Cut down or quit smoking.
- Prevent smoking relapse (keep from starting to smoke again).

Some people may smoke fewer regular cigarettes if they use e-cigs. But they may also be less likely to quit smoking altogether. Many people end up using traditional cigarettes and e-cigs together.

How can I quit using e-cigs?

There are many resources to help you quit smoking. These include counseling and certain medicines. MSK has specialists who can help you quit smoking. The program is open to MSK patients, their family, and people they live with.

The Tobacco Treatment Program uses different methods to help you quit, including individual and group counseling. The tobacco treatment experts can also give you safe and effective medicines to help resist urges to smoke.

Can I use e-cigs in the hospital?

No, you are not allowed to use e-cigs in any MSK facility.

Common questions about nicotine pouches

What are nicotine pouches?

Nicotine pouches are small, tobacco-free pouches that you place between your gum and your lip. They deliver nicotine without smoke or aerosol. Your body absorbs the nicotine through the lining of your mouth.

Nicotine pouches do not have tobacco leaves like some other smokeless tobacco products. They only have nicotine, flavors, and plant-based fibers.

Are nicotine pouches safe to use instead of smoking?

No, nicotine pouches are not safe, even though they don't have the tar and lung damage that come with cigarettes. They are considered less harmful than cigarette smoking because they don't involve burning tobacco or inhaling toxic smoke. Still, nicotine pouches are highly addictive because they deliver strong doses of nicotine.

Can nicotine pouches help me quit smoking?

Some adults use nicotine pouches to switch away from smoking. But nicotine pouches are not proven, FDA approved medicines to help you quit smoking. There isn't enough data yet to recommend them as a safe and

effective way to quit smoking. We don't know about the long-term health risks of using nicotine pouches yet.

Nicotine pouches are classified as tobacco products because they have nicotine. By using them, you risk staying addicted. This is because they deliver high amounts of nicotine.

We recommend FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to manage cravings. Examples include patches, gum, or lozenges. Talk with your tobacco treatment specialist if you have questions about using nicotine pouches.

How can I quit using nicotine pouches?

To quit nicotine pouches, you must combine a structured behavior reduction plan with strategies to beat the physical oral fixation. Oral fixation is feeling the need to have items in your mouth.

There are many resources to help you quit, such as medicine and counseling. MSK has specialists who can help you. The Tobacco Treatment Program (TTP) uses different methods to help you quit. This includes one-on-one and group counseling.

The tobacco treatment experts can help you choose safe and effective medicine to:

- Help resist urges to use nicotine pouches.
- Prevent a relapse back to smoking.

Can I use nicotine pouches in the hospital?

No, you are not allowed to use nicotine pouches in hospitals due to tobacco-free policies. This is because they are considered a “tobacco product” by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.

MSK’s Tobacco Treatment Program

To learn more about MSK’s Tobacco Treatment Program, call 212-610-0507 or visit *Tobacco Treatment Program* (www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/tobacco-treatment)

You can also watch this video:



Please visit www.mskcc.org/pe/tobacco-treatment to watch this video.

To learn more about quitting smoking, read *Tobacco Treatment Guide: For Patients and Their Families* (www.mskcc.org/pe/tobacco-treatment-guide).

More resources

American Cancer Society (ACS)

800-227-2345

www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/tobacco-and-cancer

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

E-cigarettes (Vapes): <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/index.html>

Nicotine pouches: <https://www.cdc.gov/https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/nicotine-pouches/index.html>

EX Program by Truth Initiative

<https://www.exprogram.com/>

National Cancer Institute (NCI) Toll-free Quitline

877-448-7848

www.smokefree.gov

OnCancer: News and Insights from Memorial Sloan Kettering

www.msk.org/blog/are-electronic-cigarettes-safer-use-conventional-cigarettes

US Food & Drug Administration

www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/e-cigarettes-vapes-and-other-electronic-

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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