Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

What You Need to Know About Vaping and Electronic Cigarettes

You may have heard electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), sometimes called JUULS, vapes, and vape pens, are safer than using tobacco. Using e-cigarettes can also sometimes be promoted to help you quit other tobacco products. The truth is we don't know if they are safe. E-cigarettes may be risky for your overall health.

Using them is risky for your health now, and possibly later when you are older too. It will take decades for researchers to understand the long-term impact of e-cigarette use. This is because they are a newer product. There has not been a lot of time to study any risks to your health.

Healthcare providers have been seeing an alarming rise in people who use e-cigarettes developing rare lung problems. Research shows using e-cigarettes puts some harmful chemicals into your body. Healthcare providers and researchers also see signs these products can be addictive.

At Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK), we have a dedicated team of tobacco treatment specialists. They are experts who help people quit using many different tobacco products, including:

- cigarettes
- cigars
- cigarillos
- little cigars
- chewing tobacco
- nicotine

- tobacco pouches
- e- cigarettes
- hookah
- pipes
- snuff

How Do E-Cigarettes Affect My Health?

When you use an e-cigarette, the device heats a liquid that produces an aerosol (or "vapor") you breathe in. Your lungs are not designed to breathe in aerosol particles. They are designed to take in oxygen. The e-cigarette liquid has high amounts of nicotine, the same addictive drug inside cigarettes.

The e-cigarette liquid often has other chemicals which may damage your lungs. When you use e-cigarettes, you may notice some poor changes to your health, including:

- Feeling out of breath.
- Headaches
- Nausea (feeling like you want to throw up).
- Coughing or wheezing when you breathe.

These can also be early signs of a condition called popcorn lung which is linked to using e-cigarettes.

People who use e-cigarettes may be at risk for serious lung injuries that may need urgent medical care.

What's Inside E-Cigarette Liquids?

E-cigarette liquids are known by a few names, including e-liquid, e-juice, or vape juice. The liquid contains flavorings, nicotine, and chemicals to create the vapor you breathe in.

E-cigarettes may release chemicals, heavy metals, and nicotine when the e-liquid is heated.

There are thousands of kinds of e-cigarettes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not yet monitor the making of these devices or the liquid inside. Without FDA guidelines, we don't know what is inside of every kind of e-cigarette.

Are E-Cigarettes a Good Way to Quit Smoking?

E-cigarettes are not an FDA-approved method of quitting smoking. Many people who use e- cigarettes never completely quit smoking. In many cases, they use both products together. The MSK Tobacco Treatment Program uses research-based approaches that have shown high quit rates for all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Actions You Can Take When You're Ready

- Learn about the health benefits of quitting.
- Find your reasons for quitting or cutting down.
- Set a plan for yourself.
- Talk to your healthcare provider and find a tobacco treatment program.
- See if you are eligible for lung cancer screening with this 2-minute quiz.

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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