

Argentina bans electronic cigarettes

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Argentina on Monday banned the import, sale and promotion of electronic cigarettes, saying there is no proof they help smokers kick the tobacco habit.

The government agency that regulates pharmaceuticals and food issued a blanket ban for the devices in a statement.

The plastic cigarettes function as mini [aerosols](#), releasing artificial smoke with or without nicotine. Manufacturers say the cigarettes are not harmful to the smoker or people around them -- a claim [health experts](#) reject.

Experts also said the devices, which are meant to simulate the experience of puffing on a cigarette, are ineffective in helping smokers end their habit.

"There is no scientific evidence that validates these products as auxiliary measures to stop smoking, nor their safety," said Roberto Lede, a senior official in Argentina's state regulatory office said.

The statement mentioned a [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) recommendation stating that the level of safety and the degree of nicotine absorption by these products has not been established.

Eduardo Bianco, a leading Uruguayan anti-tobacco expert, said at a WHO health conference in Uruguay in November that electronic cigarettes "sabotaged [smoking prevention](#) efforts" designed to encourage

people to quit.

Argentina joins Uruguay, Colombia and Panama in banning electronic cigarettes. The devices however have not been banned in the United States or the European Union.

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