

# E-cigarettes: Not a healthy alternative to smoking

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Credit: TheNorlo/Wikipedia

Caveat emptor – or "buyer beware" holds true when it comes to the unknown health effects of e-cigarettes. An article in the June issue of *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), examines risks, including the ongoing dependence on nicotine and the dual use of e-cigarettes and regular cigarettes.

The article examines the idea that one of the initial "health benefits" proposed by [e-cigarettes](#) makers was that it would help those who smoke [cigarettes](#) cut back. The authors say that theory hasn't been proven, and there's no evidence to support the claims.

"Despite the apparent optimism surrounding e-cigarettes and their purported therapeutic role in smoking cessation, there just simply is not enough evidence to suggest that consumers should use e-cigarettes for this purpose." said allergist Andrew Nickels, MD, lead author, ACAAI member, Mayo Clinic Division of Allergy and Immunology.

Another cause for concern is that when people use e-cigarettes in public and still smoke regular cigarettes at home, they continue to expose children and asthma sufferers in the household to dangerous second hand smoke.

"Dual use of both e-cigarettes and regular cigarettes carries the risk of secondhand smoke exposure, causing worsening respiratory effects on children and asthma sufferers. It also promotes ongoing nicotine dependence," said Chitra Dinakar, MD, co-author, ACAAI fellow and Professor of Pediatrics, Children's Mercy Hospitals.

Because e-cigarettes are fairly new, there could be other long-term health complications that have yet to be discovered. Results of long-term exposure to such substances are unknown. Due to the lack of production oversight, most consumers don't know what's in the e-cigarettes they buy. The US Food and Drug Administration admits that the safety and efficacy of e-cigarettes hasn't been fully studied, and consumers have no way of knowing if e-cigarettes are safe for their intended use.

Organizations like ACAAI are advocating for enhanced scrutiny and regulation by the FDA. The ACAAI's position statement on e-cigarettes recognizes that nicotine delivered by any mechanism represents a drug

exposure, and that vaporization instruments are a drug delivery system, both of which are within the Federal Drug Agency's scope of regulation.

Inhaling irritants such as smoke and vapors has an impact on the lungs, whether it is mild or severe. And irritants can cause asthma attacks in some individuals. These attacks are responsible for some of the 4,000 [asthma](#)-related deaths per year.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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