

England set to light up e-cigs on prescription for smokers

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England's state-funded National Health Service (NHS) could start prescribing medically licensed electronic cigarettes to smokers in a world first, the health ministry said Friday.

The move comes despite international concerns about the effects of commercially sold e-cigarettes and the popularity of vaping among [young people](#).

The country's medicines regulator is publishing updated guidance that the ministry said "paves the way for medically licensed [e-cigarette](#) products to be prescribed for tobacco smokers who wish to quit smoking".

Manufacturers of e-cigarettes will be able to submit products for approval in the same way as other medicines available on the NHS.

"E-cigarettes contain nicotine and are not risk free, but expert reviews from the UK and US have been clear that the regulated e-cigarettes are less harmful than smoking," the ministry said.

They have been shown "to be highly effective in supporting those trying to quit", it added.

Over six million people still smoke in England, according to the government, with rates much higher in poorer regions. Smoking caused almost 64,000 deaths in 2019.

Health minister Sajid Javid said medical prescription of e-cigarettes "has the potential to tackle the stark disparities in smoking rates across the country".

The MHRA regulator issued a statement saying it wants to "encourage the licensing of [electronic cigarettes](#) (e-cigarettes) and other inhaled NCPs (nicotine-containing products) as medicines" for treating those dependent on tobacco.

E-cigarettes regulated as medicine could contain larger amounts of

nicotine than permitted for commercial sale, it added.

The move by England's [health authorities](#) comes despite international concerns about the trend for vaping.

The World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned in July that e-cigarettes are "harmful and must be better regulated".

The US in 2019 had a large outbreak of acute lung disease linked to a substance commonly added to vaping products containing THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis.

This prompted the US government to make legal changes to curb youth vaping.

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