

Is vaping any healthier than smoking?

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There's been plenty of scientific debate about whether vaping is safer than tobacco, and whether it may help some people stop smoking.

According to a recent [Cochrane Review](#) analysis of 78 studies, [electronic cigarettes](#) show more success in helping people quit [smoking](#) than traditional nicotine-replacement therapies, such as nicotine patches and gums.

"The most important finding from our recent review update is that for the first time there is high certainty evidence that nicotine e-cigarettes are more effective than traditional nicotine-replacement therapies, such as patches, gum or lozenges, in helping people to quit smoking," said study co-author Ailsa Butler. She is a postdoctoral researcher from the University of Oxford's Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, in the United Kingdom.

But is vaping better than smoking?

Let's look at how vaping compares to smoking in terms of its safety and effects on your health.

How vaping works

Vapes, or e-cigarettes, are [handheld devices](#) that contain a reservoir for liquid, according to the [U.S. National Institutes of Health](#). This liquid is vaporized upon heating. The [heating element](#) is usually powered by a battery.

The liquid that goes into the reservoir or "pod" comes in both nicotine and nicotine-free forms. While the liquid may be free of harsh chemicals, it may contain carcinogens or other toxins that can be harmful to your health, according to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) (NIDA).

Vaping versus smoking: How do they compare?

The NIDA points out that the current evidence shows that vaping may indeed be "less harmful" than smoking traditional cigarettes.

"All the evidence we present points to nicotine [electronic cigarettes] and non-nicotine [electronic cigarettes] being less harmful than combustible cigarettes," Butler said. "However, due to the lack of long-term evidence, we cannot comment on the safety of e-cigarettes used for longer than two years."

American Lung Association spokesperson Dr. Jamie Garfield said of vaping versus smoking, "A cigarette is nicotine and tar, and it is combusted and burned. We know from lots of data on [cigarette smoke](#) that they're injurious to every organ. Tobacco is the #1 preventable cause of death in the United States. E-cigarettes don't have the same pattern of injury. They're not safe—but are they safer? Maybe. We can't really make statements about these products' safety because we have no real clarity about what's inside them."

What effects can vaping have on your health?

While vaping shows some promise for quitting smoking, it comes with its own health risks, according to NIDA. These include breathing issues, lung illnesses and injuries, and issues with brain development during the teen years.

"Nicotine affects concentration and [brain development](#), which continues into your mid-20s," Garfield said.

"One of the biggest concerns I have with e-cigarettes is... they created another generation of nicotine addiction. That's really where I have such a problem in supporting them in any way," Garfield added.

NIDA states that some evidence reveals vaping may actually prompt

teenagers to try smoking cigarettes. However, a recent [study](#) published in the *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* journal showed the use of traditional cigarettes wasn't significantly higher among adolescent vapers than among non-vapers.

Can transitioning from smoking to vaping help you quit smoking?

Garfield said that, "for the adult smoker, there's probably some utility in switching" to e-cigarettes.

However, she pointed out that it's difficult to know what's in vaping products to effectively compare them to other methods that are used to help people quit smoking, because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration "does not regulate them [e-cigarettes] right now."

What's the best way to quit smoking?

Garfield recommends a combination of behavioral therapy and the smoking-cessation medication Chantix for the best results.

"In every therapy that we've compared Chantix to other nicotine-replacement therapy, Chantix wins in terms of the most people are tobacco-free after six months," Garfield said.

How does this advice compare to what Butler and her team have uncovered about the best way to quit smoking?

"Evidence from the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group has found that the most effective way to quit smoking is to use a combination of

behavioral support, such as counseling, alongside a stop-smoking medication or an e-cigarette," Butler said.

The final verdict on whether [vaping](#) is safer than smoking? Vaping may be less harmful than smoking traditional cigarettes and may help you quit smoking, especially when you combine it with other smoking-cessation therapies and medications.

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