

Study finds methods to quit smoking effective regardless of mental health history

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Unsmoked cigarette. Credit: Mathew MacQuarrie on Unsplash; Unsplash License

Sarah Jackson and colleagues from University College London and King's College London branches of the SPECTRUM Consortium

conducted a survey to study how mental health relates to methods people use to quit smoking, also known as smoking cessation aids.

While the number of adults who smoke cigarettes has declined globally, people with mental health conditions are more likely to smoke and to do so more heavily. Because of these differences in [tobacco use](#), the researchers theorized that the effectiveness of [smoking cessation](#) aids may be altered in individuals with a mental health condition.

However, in their findings published in *PLOS Mental Health*, they report that smoking cessation aids are actually equally effective for people with and without a history of mental health conditions.

The researchers surveyed over 5,000 people who regularly smoked and attempted to quit in the past year. About 45% of these participants reported having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. In line with previous studies, participants with mental health conditions reported a higher level of addiction to cigarettes.

The methods participants used in their attempts to quit smoking ranged widely. The most common smoking cessation aids were non-combustible nicotine products. Vaping products ([e-cigarettes](#)) were used by 39% of people with a mental health condition and 31% of people without.

The next most common aids were other over-the-counter nicotine replacements, such as lozenges and patches. Less than 5% of participants reported using other aids like [prescription medications](#) or behavioral interventions.

People with mental health conditions were more likely than those without to choose vaping products, prescription nicotine replacement therapy, and self-help websites. However, the researchers found that a person's mental health condition did not appear to alter the effectiveness

of these smoking cessation aids or any others.

Among all participants, the researchers report that the most effective aids were vaping, a drug called varenicline that interacts with nicotine receptors in the brain, and heated tobacco products. Heated tobacco products are a new type of smoking cessation aid that heats tobacco leaves but does not burn them, and this study is the first to look at their real-world effectiveness. The researchers did not find clear benefits of using any of the other smoking cessation aids.

The results of this study can help smokers and [health care workers](#) make informed decisions when choosing methods to quit smoking. The researchers note that, "We found no evidence to suggest that any method of stopping smoking was more or less effective for people with a history of mental health conditions. Our findings should provide reassurance to people with [mental health conditions](#) who want to stop smoking that their condition need not affect their choice of cessation aid."

More information: Jackson SE, Brose L, Buss V, Shahab L, Robson D, Brown J (2024) Moderation of the real-world effectiveness of smoking cessation aids by mental health conditions: A population study. *PLOS Mental Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmen.0000007](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmen.0000007)

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