

Targeted health messaging needed in era of vaping, researchers say

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Health authorities should develop targeted health messages for vaping product and e-liquid packaging to encourage smokers to switch from cigarettes to e-cigarettes and to prevent non-smokers from taking up vaping, a researcher at the University of Otago, Wellington says.

Professor Janet Hoek, a Co-Director of the University's ASPIRE 2025 Research Centre has led new Health Research Council-funded research analyzing the impact of on-package messaging on e-liquids.

The research team found messages presenting electronic [nicotine](#) delivery systems as a lower risk alternative to smoking could encourage about a third of [smokers](#) to trial them. On the other hand, messages about the increased risks of taking up vaping appeared to strongly discourage non-smokers from trying [e-cigarettes](#).

Researchers asked non-smokers to view e-liquid bottles featuring different statements, including, "If you are a non-smoker, vaping increases harms to your health," and an addiction warning stating,

"Vaping products that contain nicotine are highly addictive."

Smokers were asked to consider a different set of messages and an addiction warning. Professor Hoek says two messages, in particular, were the most effective: "If you are a smoker, vaping reduces harms to your health" and "If you are a smoker, vaping reduces your risk of lung disease."

"Currently many countries require an addiction warning on electronic nicotine delivery system products, but our results suggest including a message to smokers about the reduced health risks of vaping could be more likely to encourage smokers to switch.

"By contrast, addiction warnings and messages about the increased health risk from using electronic nicotine delivery systems appear likely to strongly discourage uptake among susceptible non-smokers, occasional and former smokers."

Professor Hoek says so far no countries have introduced on-pack messaging to encourage different behaviors, with on-pack warnings typically stating that nicotine is addictive and advising non-smokers not to use electronic nicotine delivery systems.

"If [policy-makers](#) want to encourage the uptake of electronic nicotine delivery systems among smokers, yet deter it among others, a targeted messaging strategy could be more effective."

The study is thought to be the first to examine how both reduced-risk and increased-risk messaging could affect the appeal and potential use of electronic nicotine delivery systems.

More information: Janet Hoek et al. Analysis of on-pack messages for e-liquids: a discrete choice study, *Tobacco Control* (2021). [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056033](#)

Provided by University of Otago

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