



BC Healthy Living Alliance

working together to promote wellness and prevent chronic disease

BC Healthy Living Alliance Position Statement Regarding E-cigarettes

E-Cigarettes (Electronic cigarettes) or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) are electronic vaporizing systems intended to replicate the smoking experience. The user inhales vapours that are created through a heating process that vapourizes a liquid solution within the device.

The solution can be composed of varying ingredients but commonly includes: propylene glycol (PG), vegetable glycerin (VG), and/or polyethylene glycol 400 (PEG400) mixed with concentrated flavours and optionally, a variable concentration of nicotine.

Risks and Unknowns

- The World Health Organization warns that e-cigarettes contain large concentrations of propylene glycol which is a known irritant when inhaled and other toxic chemicals have been found in product tests in addition to nicotine. The levels of concentrated nicotine in some solutions may also present a risk for nicotine poisoning.ⁱ
- Testing shows that there is wide variation in the levels of nicotine and other chemicals contained in the products and little way for consumers to be certain of ingredients with the lack of regulation.ⁱ
- Although touted by manufacturers and some users as a cessation tool or harm reduction method, there is currently limited but not enough scientific evidence to substantiate that claim.
- They are promoted by some manufacturers such as 'Smoking Everywhere' as a product that can be used anywhere and a way to get around public smoking bans. This raises concerns that a powerful deterrent to tobacco use will be lost as people who have quit or who are struggling to quit and youth will be enticed to try them, to use nicotine more regularly and this could lead to renormalization.
- Health Canada, Vancouver Coastal Health, The World Health Organization and other Canadian and International health organizations have all advised the public against using e-cigarettes.

Regulation: E-cigarettes that contain nicotine are not authorized for sale in Canada.

Advertising e-cigarettes as a cessation tool or NRT is not permitted as there is not yet sufficient evidence to prove that they are effective. A significant loophole in the regulatory framework exists in that the devices themselves can be sold legally as can liquid that does not contain

nicotine. However, it is very easy to purchase nicotine-based liquid on the internet or illegally in non-compliant stores.

A quick search on Google reveals that a range E-cigarette devices and liquid (or e-juice) with and without nicotine are being sold in many BC communities including: Burnaby, Langley, Nanaimo, Victoria and Vancouver.

BCHLA recommends exercising the precautionary principle in light of the lack of scientific research on the potential harms of using electronic cigarettes and exposure to vapours.

Recommendations:

- Study the potential application of e-cigarettes as a cessation therapy as well as potential health harms to direct users and from environmental exposure.
- Regulate the industry:
 - Develop and enforce standards for all liquid solutions sold for the purpose of vaporized inhalation;
 - prohibit the use of candy and fruit flavours that have strong appeal to youth; and
 - require devices to be visually distinct from traditional cigarettes so they will not contribute to re-normalization of smoking.
- E-cigarettes with or without nicotine should be subject to the same regulations that currently apply to traditional cigarettes. Specifically:
 - Not be sold to minors
 - Not advertised, displayed or promoted in stores that are accessible to minors or where the signage may be seen from the outside
 - Not allowed to be used in all places that are currently banned to smoking as outlined in BC's tobacco control act and municipal smoking by-laws.

Subjecting e-cigarettes to the same regulations as other tobacco products would ensure clarity to users and vendors of e-cigarette products and the public in general. It would also protect citizens from the unknown health effects of vapours, reduce the risk of youth initiation and safeguard the gains made from de-normalizing tobacco use in public places.

ⁱ World Health Organization. Questions and answers on electronic cigarettes or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)
http://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/statements/electronic_cigarettes/en/ Accessed 14-02-06