E-cigarettes and the law in South Australia

- In Australia nicotine is considered a dangerous poison and cannot be legally sold or imported without an appropriate licence.
- In Australia nicotine e-liquid or cartridges are not approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for use as cessation aids (unlike traditional nicotine replacement therapy products such as patches or gum), therefore it is illegal to sell or promote as such here.
- If the delivery device resembles a tobacco product, it is illegal to sell in South Australia.
- However possession of e-cigarettes (containing nicotine or otherwise) is not illegal

Are e-cigarettes regulated in other countries?

While currently restricted in Australia, Denmark and Canada, other countries such as New Zealand, regulate e-cigarettes as medicines. A total ban prohibits their use in Brazil, Singapore and Norway. The United Kingdom will license e-cigarettes as medicines from 2016, when new European tobacco laws come into force.

Want further information?


For assistance and information on quitting smoking call...

 Quitline
 13 7848

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PO Box 929,
Unley BC SA 5061
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E quitline@cancersa.org.au
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What is an e-cigarette?

An e-cigarette, also known as an electronic cigarette, is a personal inhaler device used like a cigarette but is not actually lit like a traditional cigarette. They are powered by a rechargeable battery that vaporizes the contents of a replaceable/refillable cartridge. Using e-cigarettes is commonly known as “vaping” for this reason. The contents of the cartridge often include propylene glycol (the chemical used in theatre smoke machines) or glycerol and a flavoured liquid that may or may not contain nicotine. This refill liquid is commonly known as e-liquid.

How are e-cigarettes used?

Electronic cigarettes are used much like a traditional cigarette in that the vapour produced is inhaled into the lungs. The vapour produced by the propylene glycol/glycerol/e-liquid mixture feels like smoke to the person who inhales, and resembles smoke to the casual observer once the e-cigarette user exhales—but without the characteristic lingering odour of traditional tobacco smoke. Illustrated below is a diagram of a typical electronic cigarette and the mechanics within it to produce the smoke-like vapour and glowing tip.

Why use e-cigarettes, are there any benefits?

Electronic cigarettes are attractive alternatives to traditional cigarettes for a number of reasons:

- They do not contain the thousands of known chemicals found in tobacco smoke, so are seen as a ‘healthier’ alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes.
- Can address tobacco addiction (containing nicotine and allowing people the hand-mouth action of smoking).
- As there is no smoke, there is reduced risk of passive smoking.
- There are no cigarette butts produced, so are considered a ‘green alternative’.
- Some may be using e-cigarettes in an attempt to cut down or stop their actual cigarette usage.
- Curiosity of a novel product.
- Cheaper than smoking.

Are there any downsides to e-cigarette use?

There are some risks to be aware of when using e-cigarettes:

- They are largely made by independent factories all around the world—not tobacco or pharmaceutical companies which may mean the e-liquid and device (including battery) might be of unknown quality, compromising safety or satisfaction of the product.
- E-liquid/cartridge may contain other undisclosed, dangerous ingredients—or leak posing a danger to pets and small children.
- There isn’t a lot of reliable evidence that using e-cigarettes helps smokers reduce traditional cigarette use.
- E-cigarette use may reinforce nicotine addiction—being able to be used when traditional cigarettes might be prohibited, increasing nicotine exposure.
- Novelty factor may be more attractive to children/young people that may use e-cigarettes and progress to traditional cigarettes.
- No long term research into the health effects of e-cigarette use.