**Q1 **

**Handout for Clients**

**E-cigarettes/vapes Questions & Answers**

**E-cigarettes, also known as vapes, are considerably safer than smoking cigarettes. They allow you to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than smoke. Cigarettes deliver nicotine along with thousands of harmful chemicals. On its own, nicotine is relatively harmless.**

These devices deliver nicotine within an inhalable aerosol by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and/or glycerol, plus flavours. This aerosol is commonly referred to as vapour and so the use of an e-cigarette is described as vaping. Unlike cigarettes, there is no combustion (burning) involved with e-cigarettes so there is no smoke and no other harmful products of combustion, such as tar and carbon monoxide.

E-cigarettes generally consist of a battery, a heating element or coil (atomiser) and e-cigarette liquid (e-liquid). The e-liquid can be in sealed cartridges or added to a tank system.

**Is nicotine dangerous?**

Nicotine does not cause smoking related disease, such as cancers and heart disease. These are caused by other chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Nicotine is addictive however and it is why people continue to smoke despite knowing about the harmful effects of tobacco. Nicotine in e-cigarettes poses little danger to adult users. In order to prevent accidental poisoning of children, e-cigarettes and liquids should be stored away safely (just as you would with household cleaning products and medicines, including NRT products).

Your stop smoking advisor can support you to use an e-cigarette to stop smoking, but you will need to purchase your own from a reputable supplier. Clients of stop smoking services who combined e-cigarettes with behavioural support had the highest quit-rates in 2014–15

**Which e-cigarette should I start with?**

This is very much a personal choice. The refillable tank system e-cigarettes (second and third generation) might take a bit of getting used to, but they allow the use of more flavours and a better sensation, and generally deliver more nicotine than the e-cigarettes that look like cigarettes. Specialist e-cigarette retailers can provide advice and there are also internet forums where e-cigarette users discuss the different product types.

**How often should e-cigarettes be used to help me stop smoking?**

As often as you need to help manage nicotine withdrawal and urges to smoke. You will soon discover the best way for you of how to use your e-cigarette, and find that you’re using it when you feel a need to ‘top-up’. It’s not like a cigarette, which you would smoke from start to finish, with an e-cigarette you can ‘sip’ on it once or twice, and then put it away. If you find you’ve got it in your mouth all the time, you might need to use a stronger e-liquid.

**How much do e-cigarettes cost?**

You can expect to pay around £20 for a good quality, and easy to use, refillable

second generation starter kit. More advanced e-cigarettes for the adventurous or experienced user can range from £30 to several hundred pounds, although a decent third generation kit can be bought for about £70. As with other consumables, you will need to pay more for better quality products.

**Will e-cigarettes be cheaper for me than smoking?**

Yes. Once you have chosen your starter kit then you only need to replace the atomiser (heating coil or ‘head’) for a couple of pounds and purchase your e-liquid which can start at £3 for 10 ml. You will notice savings very quickly compared with buying cigarettes.

**Is it OK to smoke and vape at the same time?**

Yes. There is no evidence that smoking cigarettes and vaping at the same time increases health risks. However, the greatest health benefits are seen when people stop smoking tobacco completely, so quitting smoking should be the goal. Stop smoking services can provide advice and support to help you reach this goal.

Some people manage to switch completely to vaping quickly, whilst others take a little time. You may have to try a number of different e-cigarettes and e-liquids before you find the one that enables you to stop smoking completely, but this is quite normal.

**Are e-cigarettes smoked in same way as cigarettes?**

Using an e-cigarette is different to smoking a cigarette. This usually involves taking slower and longer puffs over a longer period of time; this is because e-cigarettes heat a coil in a liquid (think of a kettle). You may feel the need to take a few puffs on an e-cigarette at times when you would not have smoked; this is nothing to worry about and your pattern of e-cigarette use will develop over time.

**When does the e-cigarette atomiser need changing?**

The life of your atomiser (heating coil) will depend on how much you use your e-cigarette and the quality of your device; typically it should last up to two weeks but it could be a lot longer than this. Low vapour production, a ‘burnt’ taste or poor / reduced flavour are signs that your atomiser needs to be replaced.

**What nicotine strength e-liquid should I go for?**

How much nicotine you require will depend upon how much nicotine you are getting from your cigarettes. And of course, how much nicotine you get from your e-liquid will depend upon the type of e-cigarette that you use and how you use it. As a rough guide, most 20-a-day smokers find that 18mg/ml (1.8%) is sufficient, so you could start with this and see how you get on.

**How many bottles of e-liquid will I need in a week?**

As a rough guide, for a 20-a-day smoker two 10ml bottles of 18mg/ml e-liquid will usually last a week. However this will depend on the quality of your e-cigarette and your puffing technique; with better devices and experience, e-liquid use will often reduce. You’ll soon get to know how much you need.

**How do I choose a flavour?**

This is a personal choice. Some people start with tobacco flavour, or menthol flavour if they smoke mentholated cigarettes, but one of the advantages of e-cigarettes is that you can experiment and try new flavours. People usually try a few different flavours until they find the one that suits them. Some people choose to move away completely from tobacco flavours, preferring sweet and fruit flavours for example.

**Are e-cigarettes dangerous, do they blow up or catch fire?**

As with any rechargeable device, like mobile phones and laptops, it is important to charge with the correct charger and not to leave an e-cigarette unattended whilst charging. Ensure that you buy from reputable suppliers and avoid generic charging equipment. There have been reported cases of e-cigarettes causing fires at a rate of around two per week in the UK, this is far fewer than the number of fires caused by cigarettes.

**Can e-cigarettes lead to using more nicotine and overdosing?**

This is a common misconception around e-cigarettes. As with NRT, if you have more nicotine than you are used to then you might feel a little nauseous or lightheaded, both of which pass quickly. If this happens you can just reduce the level of nicotine in the e-liquid that you buy, or use the e-cigarette less. You are in no danger of poisoning yourself and there have been no cases of overdose from inhaling e-liquid.

**Are e-cigarettes safer for me than smoking?**

Yes. Experts estimate that e-cigarettes are, based on what we know so far, around 95% safer than cigarettes. Smoking is associated with a number of very serious health risks to both the smoker and to others around them. Therefore, smokers who switch from smoking tobacco to e-cigarettes substantially reduce a major risk to their health.

**Is it true that e-cigarettes can produce harmful chemicals?**

Some studies have detected chemicals in e-cigarette vapour that are known to cause health problems. However, these chemicals have been found at very low levels that are unlikely to represent a serious risk to health. When e-cigarettes are used within normal operating levels (e.g. not overheated), there are far fewer harmful chemicals present in their vapour than in tobacco smoke. If the e-liquid is being overheated it tends to produce an acrid, unpleasant taste – you will know if this happens!

**Why do I get a bit of a cough when I use my e-cigarette?**

This isn’t unusual and you may benefit from switching from an e-liquid with a high- proportion of propylene glycol to one with more vegetable glycol, which can be more soothing.

**Is second-hand vapour from e-cigarettes dangerous?**

Some studies have found traces of toxicants in second-hand vapour, but at such low levels that they do not pose a health risk to bystanders. There is no evidence that second-hand vapour is dangerous to others; however, it helps to be respectful when using e-cigarettes around others, especially non-smokers.

**Are e-cigarettes safe to use during pregnancy?**

E-cigarettes do not produce tar and carbon monoxide, two of the main toxins in cigarette smoke. Carbon monoxide is particularly harmful to developing babies. The vapour from an e-cigarette does contain some of the potentially harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke, but at much lower levels.

E-cigarettes are fairly new and there are still some things we don’t know. However, current evidence indicates they are much less risky than smoking. If using an e-cigarette helps you to stop smoking, it is much safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke.

References:

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