

Electronic Cigarettes & Vaping- Topic of the Month

UPDATED AUGUST 21, 2023

What is vaping?

Electronic cigarettes (E-Cigs) are non-combustible products containing varying amounts of nicotine. They use an aerosol to produce the vapor, which contains ultrafine particles, oils, and heavy metals that can injure users' lungs. These products also contain flavoring and glycerin, and may contain other ingredients, including illegal substances.

Vaping refers to inhaling/exhaling the vapor produced by E-Cigs. In 2016, the *Federal Drug Administration (FDA)* modified the definition of "tobacco products" to include the electronic delivery systems. In recent years, there have been reports of an [Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with the Use of E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products](#). One possibly connection is associated with the inclusion of THC (a component of cannabis) in some of the products available to consumers. While investigations of the cause of lung injury are focused on uncontrolled/regulated vaping products as a primary concern, overall tobacco use continues to be a major health concern.

Under Minnesota State Law, the sale of tobacco, tobacco-related devices, or electronic delivery devices is prohibited to persons under the age of 21. ([2022 MN Statutes, Chapter 609, Section 609.685](#))

Adverse Effects of Vaping

MDH, along with many other state health departments and the *Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*, have also investigated reports of severe lung injury related to e-cigarettes and other vaping products. Symptoms of lung injury have been the most common problems reported and include shortness of breath, fever, cough, dizziness, headache, chest pain, vomiting.

People using e-cigarettes as a replacement for traditional cigarettes, continue to put themselves at risk for lung injury (leading to illness, pneumonia, or even death), as well as affecting cardiovascular health and central nervous systems, adverse brain development (impacting attention, learning, and impulse control), and possible mood disorders (including anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts).

In 2018, MDH shared a [Health Advisory- Nicotine Risks for Children, Teens, and Pregnant Women](#), highlighting research that has shown tobacco use causes adverse health risks to pregnant women, the unborn fetus, and their children. *Tobacco use, in any form, results in nicotine in the bloodstream that can be transferred to the fetus via the amniotic fluid.* Health officials cannot guarantee the safety of these over-the-counter tobacco products for anyone using them or those directly exposed to their use.

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[Secondhand Smoke](#) is another concern. Similar to cigarettes, aerosol from E-cigs contain harmful particles, heavy metals, and other cancer-causing chemicals. Exposure to the vapors can trigger those with breathing problems, increasing their risk of illness. The *CDC* reports that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

WIC's Role

WIC's role is to assess exposure to tobacco during the WIC nutrition assessment and provide education and guidance to participants as needed. Share the [Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs](#) nutrition education card with the participant. Referrals to smoking cessation programs may be provided when *any* tobacco product is reportedly used.

Associated Risk Codes:

- Risk code [371- Nicotine and Tobacco Use](#) should be assigned when a pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum participant reports *any smoking of nicotine and/or tobacco products, i.e., cigarettes, pipes, cigars or electronic nicotine delivery systems (e-cigs or vapes), hookahs, smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff, or dissolvable), or nicotine replacement therapies (gums or patches).*
- Risk code [904- Environmental Tobacco Smoke Exposure](#) (ETS) should be assigned when reported *exposure to smoke from tobacco products inside enclosed areas, like the home, place of childcare, etc. ETS is known as secondhand, passive, or involuntary smoke. This includes the exposure to the aerosol from electronic nicotine delivery.*

Participants experiencing symptoms related to lung injury should be directed to seek care from their health care provider.

Talking points for using with Participants:

- Maternal smoking, inhaling and/or ingesting nicotine while pregnant or breastfeeding exposes the fetus/infant to nicotine and many other toxic components.
- Tobacco products, and tobacco-like products, include cigarettes, e-cigs, cigars, cigarillos, hookahs, pipes, chewing tobacco, and snuff.
- [Secondhand Smoke](#) poses further risk to your infant and young children. Learn how to keep your family safe.
- Accidental exposure to the liquids contained in E-cigs can result in nicotine poisoning at high enough doses, especially in children.
- The State of Minnesota has a free smoking cessation plan. Check out [quit partner](#) or call 1(800)-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or contact your health care provider.

Staff Resources:

- [E-cigarettes and Vaping: Resources for Health Professionals](#)- MDH prevention and control.

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- [Quitting Commercial Tobacco](#): MDH list of **free** smoking cessation resources.
- [Helping People Quit Commercial Tobacco](#)- MDH resources for professionals working with families.
- [Electronic Cigarettes](#): CDC presents facts, health effects, and risks of use.
- [Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems \(ENDS\)](#): FDA reviews vaporizers, e-Cigarettes, and other ENDS.

Using a Participant-Centered Approach to Discuss Vaping

Using [PCS Counseling Skills](#) to evoke change can be challenging, particularly when it comes to discussing habit-forming substances like tobacco. When approaching the topic of tobacco use, it will be important to use reflective listening and affirmations to let the participant know you are not judging them. Always ask permission before you share concerns, information, and resources.

Below is a scenario demonstrating a conversation with a pregnant woman who has switched from smoking cigarettes to vaping.

Background: Lorain is a pregnant woman who has been smoking for a few years and has recently switched to vaping, as a “healthier” substitute for smoking cigarettes. This is her first appointment with WIC. She shared that she is typically a good eater, so nutrition is not really a concern for her.

CPA: Lorain, I am so glad you were able to make it today. Thank you for sharing your thoughts on nutritious eating. Now that I have shared with you what WIC offers, may I ask you some questions about yourself?

Lorain: Sure, I mean I guess that’s why I’m here.

CPA: (smiles) Absolutely! Learning more about you will help me to direct our conversation as well as our services. What concerns, if any, do you currently have about your health?

Lorain: Well, after I found out I was pregnant I decided I should probably quit smoking. I thought I would try vaping instead because I’ve heard it can be safer for the baby.

CPA: Wow, it’s great that you are committed to finding ways to be a healthier mom! How is it going with not smoking cigarettes?

Lorain: It’s good - at the mall I see this poster showing that cigarettes can be really bad for my baby’s lungs. I haven’t had even one.

CPA: You’re correct - the nicotine in cigarettes can damage a developing infant’s lungs. I think it’s great that you have been able to cut them out completely. Tell me, have you heard anything about vaping when pregnant?

Lorain: I read online that vaping has less nicotine, so I figured it must be better.

CPA: It’s great that you are doing your research. May I share with you a few things I have learned about vaping?

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Lorain: okay

CPA: Maybe you've seen vaping in the news lately. There's a lot of information out there saying it's better than cigarettes, but there can be some risks as well. Research shows that vaping can have varying levels of nicotine, which is something you mentioned, but the nicotine from vaping is still absorbed into your bloodstream and can be transferred to your fetus through the amniotic fluid. There are also tiny particles from the aerosol in the vapor that are absorbed into the lungs of the person vaping along with the nicotine.

Lorain: Oh wow, I didn't know that. I don't understand why it's promoted as safe then.

CPA: I hear you; it's confusing! With vaping being so new, there's not a lot of research yet, and there is still a lot to learn. However, the current recommendation for pregnant women is to avoid smoking in general. Do you have any thought about that?

Lorain: Well, I don't know if I could quit completely. It felt easy having the vape to fall back on.

CPA: I understand that it's hard to change habits and having an alternative feels safe for you. Would you be opened to hearing about a few programs that could help you learn about other options?

Lorain: Sure, I mean it couldn't hurt.

CPA: (smiles) I am happy to hear you are open to hearing about some options! I see that you are on MA. Did you know there is a free program called Quit partner that helps people when they are trying to stop using tobacco?

Lorain: It's free? That's amazing, I really need to start saving money with the new baby coming. I guess that would help in more ways than one!

CPA: You're right about that too! Especially since you are already committed to making healthy changes for you and the baby. This would be a great place for you to start. Thank you for sharing with me your thoughts and concerns about smoking. I'll get you the contact information for the programs we discussed.

Be sure to summarize at the end of the appointment what was discussed and, most importantly, provide a handout or contact information for any referral mentioned.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks:

[2022 MN Statutes, Chapter 609, Section 609.685](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/609.685)

(<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/609.685>)

[Health Advisory- Nicotine Risks for Children, Teens, and Pregnant Women](https://www.web.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/nicotine/docs/2017nicadvisory.pdf)

(<https://www.web.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/nicotine/docs/2017nicadvisory.pdf>)

[Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with the Use of E-Cigarette, or Vaping, Products](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html)

(https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html)

[Secondhand Smoke](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/secondhand-smoke/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/secondhand-smoke/index.html>)

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Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/gendrugs.pdf>)

371- Nicotine and Tobacco Use

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/riskcodes/371.html>)

904- Environmental Tobacco Smoke Exposure

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/riskcodes/904.html>)

quit partner (<https://quitpartnermn.com/>)

Electronic Cigarettes (https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm?deliveryName=DM7077)

Quitting Commercial Tobacco

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/quitting/index.html>)

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/vaporizers-e-cigarettes-and-other-electronic-nicotine-delivery-systems-ends>)

E-cigarettes and Vaping: Resources for Health Professionals

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/ecigarettes/health.html>)

Helping People Quit Commercial Tobacco

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/cessation/index.html>)

PCS Counseling Skills

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/counseling.html>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942. *This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*