

Electronic Cigarettes – FAQs

What are electronic cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes are devices that allow users to inhale vaporised nicotine dissolved in propylene glycol or glycerine through a device which is sometimes shaped like a cigarette. Although nicotine is addictive, the harm caused by smoking is not from nicotine but from the smoke, which electronic cigarettes do not contain.

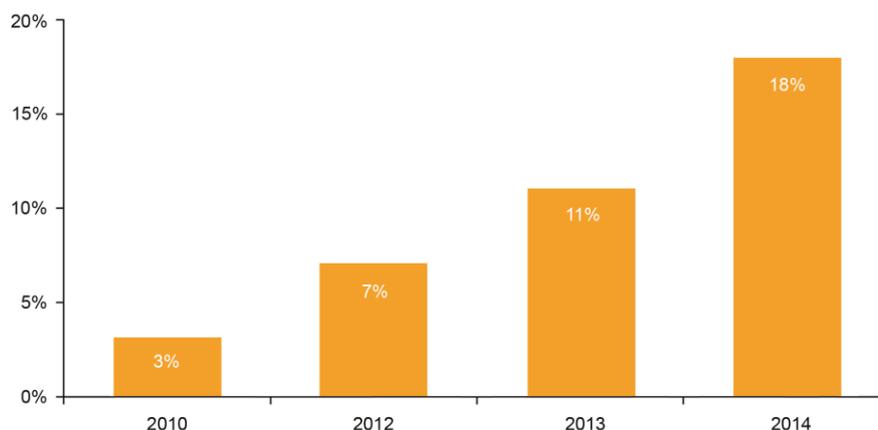
There are three main types of electronic cigarettes or vapourisers:

- Disposable products (non-rechargeable)
- An electronic cigarette kit that is rechargeable with replaceable pre-filled cartridges
- An electronic cigarette that is rechargeable and has a tank or reservoir which has to be filled with liquid nicotine.



Who uses electronic cigarettes?

Figure 1: Usage of e-cigarettes amongst adult smokers in Britain



Source: ASH/YouGov

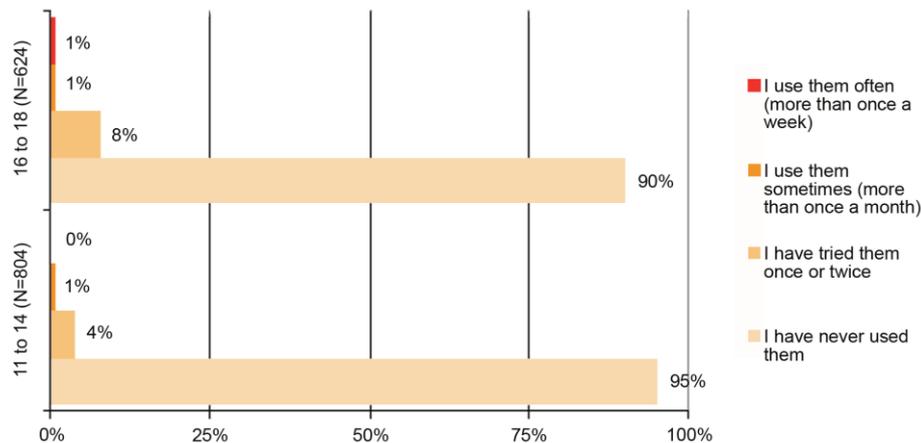
- ASH estimates that over the past two years, usage of electronic cigarettes among adults in Britain has tripled from an estimated 700,000 users in 2012 to 2.1 million in 2014.¹
- About one third of users are ex-smokers and two-thirds are current smokers.¹ Half of those who still smoke are actively trying to quit.²
- Although some have concerns that electronic cigarettes could be a gateway for young people to start smoking, current data shows that regular use of electronic cigarettes amongst children and young people is rare and is confined almost entirely to those who currently or have previously smoked.³

¹ ASH Factsheet: [Use of electronic cigarettes in Great Britain, 2014](#)

² Brown, J. et al [Real-world effectiveness of e-cigarettes when used to aid smoking cessation: A cross-sectional population study](#) *Addiction*, May 2014

³ Dockrell, M. et al [E-Cigarettes: Prevalence and Attitudes in Great Britain](#) *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, March 2013

Figure 2: Usage of e-cigarettes among children in Britain, 2013



Do electronic cigarettes help smokers quit?

Survey data suggests that, whatever the reason e-cigarette use may have been initiated, about 4 in 10 users in England currently use them in an attempt to quit smoking. Recently published population level data shows they have replaced over the counter NRT as the most popular aid people use when quitting smoking and are 60% more effective than NRT bought over the counter in helping smokers quit.⁴

The effectiveness in that study was broadly similar to using a prescription medicine (including NRT) with limited professional support and less than using a prescription medicine with specialist behavioural support. Additionally, a randomised controlled trial found that electronic cigarettes, with or without nicotine, were modestly effective at helping smokers to quit, with broadly similar achievement of abstinence as with nicotine patches.⁵

How are electronic cigarettes regulated?

Currently electronic cigarettes are regulated by consumer product regulation. From April 2016, they will come under the revised EU Tobacco Products Directive, except for those products that are licensed as medicines by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Is there a risk to non-users from electronic cigarette vapour?

Electronic cigarettes do not produce smoke, they produce a vapour which consists largely of propylene glycol or glycerin. The level of nicotine present in electronic cigarette vapour is about one tenth of that generated by a cigarette. Health risks of second-hand exposure to propylene glycol vapour are likely to be limited to irritation of the throat.

Where can electronic cigarettes be used?

- Currently, electronic cigarettes are not regulated under smokefree laws in the UK, although this is under consideration in Wales.
- In general, users are free to use them in most enclosed public places such as bars, restaurants and on public transport, although the managers of some premises have prohibited their use.
- One stated advantage of smokefree legislation is that it de-normalises smoking and there are concerns electronic cigarettes could undermine this process. However to date there is little evidence to suggest this is the case.

⁴ ASH Briefing: [Electronic cigarettes](#), May 2014

⁵ Bullen, C. et al [Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation: a randomised controlled trial](#) *The Lancet*, November 2013