

1. What are e-cigarettes?

- E-cigarettes, also known as vapers are devices that operate by heating a liquid solution to a high enough temperature so that it produces an aerosol that is inhaled. The aerosol from an e-cigarette can contain tiny chemical particles from both the liquid solution and the device (e.g., metals from the heating coil).

2. How long have they been on the market and how popular are they – internationally and in SA?

- E-cigarettes have been on the global market since the late 2000s.
- Globally, a rapid increase in vaping has been reported by Euromonitor international, showing an increase from 7 million e-cigarette users in 2011 to about 41 million in 2018.
- In South Africa e-cigarettes have been available since 2008 and there are more than 900 000 users of e-cigarettes.

3. What do e-cigarettes contain?

There is no standard list of ingredients of e-cigarettes as they have many different combinations of ingredients. The e-cigarette aerosol has been found to contain harmful substances, including:

- Nicotine -nicotine levels in e-cigarettes are highly variable, with some reaching levels near that of cigarettes.
- food additives.
- Ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs.
- Flavourings agents, which have chemicals linked to serious lung disease.
- Heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead.

4. How do they impact your health?

- E-cigarettes are not safe and are harmful to health.
- E-cigarette aerosol contains varying amounts of toxic chemicals, linked to a damage of the lung defence system, lung diseases, cancer, DNA damage, respiratory and heart diseases.

An outbreak of e-cigarette -related illness has been reported in the USA; with more than 805 lung illness cases and 12 deaths. Whilst most tobacco-related diseases have been detected after a long period of use, some victims of e-cigarette -related illness have been reported to have used e-cigarettes for a year or less .

5. Why do people believe e-cigarettes are a safer option than smoking?

- The assumption is rooted in the fact that they have been marketed as a harm-reduction tool and as an alternative to cigarettes for those trying to stop smoking.
- E-cigarettes do not contain tobacco but they still contain toxic, disease-causing chemicals which exist in cigarettes.
- E-cigarettes also have unique contents that can be toxic if inhaled, for instance most flavouring used have been approved for eating and not for inhalation.
- They contain nicotine and some have the same nicotine content with cigarettes which makes them equally addictive; disproving the claim that they are smoking cessation tools.
- We know of the harms of tobacco because of decades of research, comparatively, the doubt around the extent of damage e-cigarettes cause is due to the novelty of these products and the lack of research by the manufacturers about the impact that they have on human health.