

E-cigarettes getting more and more popular

By ACSH Staff — November 8, 2010

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How mainstream are e-cigarettes these days? Last week this writer found a starter kit advertised for \$19.99 at the cash register of his local 7-Eleven in Manhattan's TriBeCa district. Well, if they're [good enough for Katherine Heigl](#) [1]...

The [NJOY](#) [2] mini-kit came with an e-cigarette, USB charger and two nicotine cartridges. After letting it charge, ACSH staffers were vaping during our *Dispatch* meeting this morning. (Yes, really).

We were impressed by the device's realism, including a tip that glows red when you take a drag. "It does a great job of mimicking a 'real' cigarette," says Dr. Whelan. made by text type unknown

While this writer — who has never smoked cigarettes before — had a bit of a coughing fit after taking too deep a drag, most staffers didn't notice anything after taking a few puffs and exhaling an odorless vapor.

"It's not designed to give you a thrill or a high," explains Dr. Ross, a former smoker. "But addicted smokers would most likely feel it satisfied their desire to have a cigarette."

According to the NJOY user's guide, the made-in-China e-cigarette "has never been tested or proven to be a smoking cessation device and is not sold or marketed as such." The guide says the nicotine cartridge consists of "four major ingredients": water, nicotine, flavoring and propylene glycol. ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom, a chemist, says propylene glycol is a common ingredient in propellants such as asthma inhalers and is metabolized by the body into pyruvic acid, which is a natural breakdown product of glucose— "so it's essentially natural."

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Propylene glycol has been used safely for decades. Other than the nicotine, there's nothing remotely dangerous in these e-cigarettes, and it's easy to see why it would help smokers quit," adds Dr. Ross. "The only entity to have found toxic diethylene glycol in an e-cigarette is the FDA, but it's unlikely that the maker would have used that toxin instead of the benign propellant. I suspect the FDA made an error."

Addendum 11/9/2010: We received several concerned comments and even some phone calls from *Dispatch* readers who were troubled by our electronic cigarette item [yesterday](#) [3] portraying ACSH staffers "vaping." We would like to make clear that we don't condone the use of e-cigarettes by anyone other than addicted smokers who have already tried to quit without success (none of which applies to us!). We see the devices as a form of harm reduction, as a means of reducing the 400,000-plus smoking-related deaths in this country each year. While we tried a few puffs, we're not planning on taking up an e-cigarette habit, and in fact, the camera-happy device has been retired to the ACSH Hall of Fame — so chillax concerned *Dispatch* readers!

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Links

[1] <http://dailycaller.com/2010/10/16/whats-so-ridiculous-about-katherine-heigls-e-cigarette-habit/>

[2] <http://shop.njoy.com/>

[3] http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.2031/news_detail.asp