

Some first-hand experiences with e-cigarettes

By ACSH Staff — November 24, 2010

A few months ago ACSH asked our readers for their personal experiences using e-cigarettes — positive or negative. Here are some of the responses we received. (Please note that ACSH advocates e-cigarettes as a form of [harm reduction](#) [1] for [currently addicted smokers](#) [2] who have tried and failed to quit; we do not condone its use by anyone else.)

... You see, it was exactly 143 days ago that I smoked my very LAST tobacco cigarette (i.e. I finally kicked the old habit) and my life completely changed. I'm using the "low" level of nicotine now, but rarely smoke the e-cigarettes these days. BUT THEY'RE THERE, if I ever feel the urge to smoke something with tobacco in it again (which hasn't happened yet, even once). E-cigarettes are a miracle "cure," as far as I'm concerned, for a tobacco addiction.

—David B. Kelley, Ph.D.

Boston

I found e-cigarettes after an ad for one popped up on a website. I googled and began reading and doing some research. I read both the pros and cons and after a couple of weeks of reading decided to try them for myself. There was no lengthy study done on their safety but thousands upon thousands of people have been using them worldwide for the past 4-5 years with no major ill effects being reported. I am willing to risk the unknown of inhaling one chemical (that has shown no ill effects when used in other ways) in place of inhaling 4000 chemicals where many are proven killers.

I was a 30 year, 2 pack per day smoker prior to finding e-cigarettes. I completely stopped smoking cigarettes 5 days after first trying the e-cigarette and have not smoked in 6.5 weeks. That may not appear to be a significant amount of time but for me it is. I have tried numerous times to quit using just about every method available and never made it more than 5 or so days. Additionally, I have lowered my nicotine intake drastically, cutting it down to 0 nicotine for the past few days (hoping to stay there).

I feel better than I have felt in a decade. I no longer cough every 10 minutes, I'm not winded taking a walk, I can take much deeper breaths, I sleep better, I have an improved sense of taste and smell and overall I feel healthier. I honestly never believed that I would be able to walk away from cigarettes. E-cigarettes have been a life-altering product for me. For the first time in my adult life I am a non-smoker.

In my opinion e-cigarettes work so well for so many because of the number of options available. Quitting smoking via any method is difficult. Every person is different. The various models, flavors and nicotine levels allow each person to find the combination that works best for them and allows them to forever put down that pack of cigarettes.

E-cigarettes should not be banned or demonized. Instead, e-cigarettes as an alternative to smoking should be encouraged.

— Kim SanFanandre

Smoker since 19 years old. Currently 49. Tried nicotine gum, failed... Tried nicotine patch, failed... Tried therapy/support groups, failed ... All attempts to quit left me short tempered and constantly nervous. Tried one e-cig, too harsh, unreliable, failed but saw the potential. Tried a second e-cig, haven't smoked since (3 weeks ago). After about 5 days, ran out of nicotine based juice and switched to vegetable glycerin and flavorings.... Had an open pack that was about half full when I had my last analog cigarette, 3 weeks later the pack is still half full. Went to private and company parties where many people/friends were smoking, no desire to try one.

In the past when I tried to quit, I had to force myself to NOT buy cigarettes but now, I can enjoy that I don't have to. The result is the same, no cigarettes but the emotional effect is totally different.

Were it not for the e-cig, I would very likely be a smoker up to the day I died.

— Craig Schultz
Madison, Wisconsin

I have been "vaping" for a little over a month, and am one of the complete success stories - I rec'd my e-cigarette in the mail on a Monday, and smoked one drag that night of a regular cigarette. That was the last time I picked up a cigarette. More interestingly, I have not had a single craving for a cigarette.

What makes that interesting is that I am 40 and have smoked since I was 12, a pack a day for the better part of all of those years. I cannot even begin to imagine smoking a traditional cigarette now. My husband, who was only vaguely interested in "vaping" has also quit smoking cigarettes (after about the same amount of time smoking over a pack a day).

I would certainly support FDA testing of the product, but fear that Big Tobacco will begin to throw money toward blocking these devices. I know that based on my, and my husband's, experience I would be extremely nervous if my job rested on retaining smokers. One "vape" and I was done with cigarettes. Somehow I don't see Big Tobacco sitting mildly by as that happens across the country.

— Shannon Flanagan
Rotan, Texas

I smoked for 45 years. I tried “safe and effective” FDA-approved smoking cessation products to no avail, even when I also attended every session of the American Lung Association’s Freedom from Smoking Class as well. I also tried Hypnosis and Nicotine Anonymous. Each time I became abstinent from nicotine, I became very ill. Doctors could treat the jaw clenching (which finally abated after 4 weeks) and the depression, but they had nothing to treat the severe cognitive deficits. But years of inhaling smoke began to take a toll on my lungs. I used to be kept awake at night by the sound of my wheezing, and I began praying that God would send a way to allow me to stop smoking without sacrificing my brain health in exchange for body health. Over the years I tried substituting FDA-nicotine products, but they don’t provide enough nicotine to keep my brain working properly. Using 4 to 6 pieces of nicotine gum per day (as much as my poor digestive tract can handle) as well as 300 mg./day bupropion, I managed to cut down from a high of 50 cigarettes a day to 10 cigarettes per day. Adding the e-cigarette into the mix allowed me to ditch those last 10 cigarettes. I have been smoke-free ever since March 27, 2009. The wheezing is gone, along with the productive morning cough.

—Elaine Keller

Springfield, Va.

Board Member, Consumer Advocates for Smoke-Free Alternatives Association

I had smoked for 30 years and in the last 10 of those years was up to a pack and a half a day. I tried all the FDA approved NRT (patches, gum, inhalers, nose spray, Wellbutrin, Chantix, etc.) products with no success at all. All they did was make me feel guilty for failing to kick the habit and in the case of Chantix, give me horrible nightmares. I then discovered through research that all of these “approved” products to stop smoking have a 97% failure rate and that Chantix is linked with a number of suicides.

I picked up my first personal vaporizer (PV) in February of 2009. I immediately cut back my smoking from a pack and a half a day to 8 a day. Over the next two months I reduced that gradually to 2 cigarettes a day and then in April of 2009, when I purchased a better (5 volt device) PV, I quit completely. After a month of “vaping” and not smoking, I could see a significant improvement in my breathing and how I felt overall.

I know my health has improved. The last year I was smoking, I found that when I took the dog for a walk and went up the small hill out of our cul de sack, that I would get winded. After using the PV for a month after completely stopped using tobacco, I no longer got winded or had that heavy feeling in my chest. My doctor also confirmed that my breathing was much better. My doctor strongly endorsed my using the PV to stop smoking and even asked me for more information that he could share with his other patients who smoke.

The only consistent side effect is having a “dry-mouth”. I drink much more water due to vaping. I think that is a good thing, however

My doctor confirmed that my breathing and overall health has definitely improved and he strongly supports my vaping. I have been tobacco free since April of 2009.

[An E-cigarette] provides much of what cigarette smokers find pleasurable in smoking without the harmful chemicals in cigarettes, or the smell or the ashes/butts or the cost. It also does not harm others or cling to your cloths or smell up the house and car.

I, like most vapers, support thorough testing of PV’s and the e-liquid we use in them. But banning them completely, as the FDA wants to do, would be a death sentence to millions of people who have freed themselves from tobacco by using a PV. I would love for someone to explain to me how an organization like the FDA, who is suppose to protect us, is really just trying to kill us by forcing us back to using tobacco. And the FDA suggesting that NRT products work is just a plain and simple lie for the 97% who have failed using these very expensive and useless products.

... The lies and half-truths told by groups like ASH and Tobacco Free Kids about PV's should be revealed. I suspect that the link between the large pharmaceutical companies, the FDA and groups like ASH provides some answers to why they are trying to ban PV's.

My last thought on this topic: I do not know if using a personal vaporizer is 100% safe, but I know that it is 100% safer than using tobacco.

—David Maybury
Lawrence, Ga.

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