

Beat: Health

E-cigarettes significantly boost quitting success among smokers, study finds

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USPA News - People attempting to quit smoking without professional help are far more likely to succeed if they use e-cigarettes than if they use willpower alone or over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapies such as patches or gum, scientists said on Tuesday. The large survey of smokers in England by University College London (UCL) showed people who used e-cigarettes were up to 60 percent more likely to succeed in quitting smoking.

The study surveyed 5,863 smokers who had attempted to quit smoking without the aid of prescription medication or professional support between 2009 and 2014. At the time of the survey, approximately 20 percent of people trying to quit with the aid of e-cigarettes reported having completely stopped smoking conventional cigarettes. It shows e-cigarettes are a credible option for people wanting to quit smoking, though the scientists continue to recommend using professional support. "E-cigarettes could substantially improve public health because of their widespread appeal and the huge health gains associated with stopping smoking," said Professor Robert West of UCL's Department of Epidemiology & Public Health. "However, we should also recognize that the strongest evidence remains for use of the NHS (National Health Service) stop-smoking services. These almost triple a smoker's odds of successfully quitting compared with going it alone or relying on over-the-counter products." The scientists said some people, however, may not be able to fully end their habit as they will continue to use e-cigarettes indefinitely. "It is not clear whether long-term use of e-cigarettes carries health risks but from what is known about the contents of the vapor these will be much less than from smoking," West said. West added: "Some public health experts have expressed concern that widespread use of e-cigarettes could `re-normalize` smoking. However, we are tracking this very closely and see no evidence of it. Smoking rates in England are declining, quitting rates are increasing and regular e-cigarette use among never smokers is negligible." A second survey showed that most e-cigarette use involves first generation `cigalike` products rather than second generation ones that use refillable cartridges and a wider choice of nicotine concentrations and flavors. "We will continue to monitor success rates in people using e-cigarettes to stop smoking to see whether there are improvements as the devices become more advanced," added Dr Jamie Brown of UCL's Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology.

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