

VAPING INSTEAD OF SMOKING: NEITHER HABIT IS HEALTHY

By Maggie Blood



There's never been a better time to kick the stick

Whether you use sticks, pens, mini tanks or any other kind of vapourizer, now is the time to ditch your vaping habit – for good

Along with our usual reminder for everyone to brush twice a day, floss daily and keep regular dental appointments, the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) advises you to be on guard with every breath of flavoured smoke you take. While more long-term research is needed, particularly on how e-cigarettes directly affect dental health, the early results are not good.


In 2019, there was an explosion of vaping-related lung illnesses in North America that caused or contributed to the deaths of dozens of people and left thousands more injured. The Public Health Agency of Canada now requires provincial and territorial public health officials to report any cases of severe lung injuries due to vaping, and Ontario has since instituted a ban on promoting vaping products in convenience stores and gas stations. Even one of the major electronic cigarette producers has stopped selling flavoured vape pods as it faces intense backlash and allegations of aggressive marketing to children and teens.



Current data suggests vaping devices create a variety of chemicals and metal particles that are then inhaled by users. These toxic levels may be lower than what is in tobacco smoke, but the fact remains: some of these chemicals are poisonous and known to cause cancer.

Dr. Deborah Saunders, Medical Director of the Department of Dental Oncology at the Northeast Cancer Centre in Sudbury, Ont., (and *Smile's* Editor-in-Chief) says there's a long list of nasty ingredients you could be breathing in. "Some of the chemicals identified in the aerosols of electronic cigarettes include propylene glycol, glycerine, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, acrolein, toluene, nitrosamines, nickel, cadmium, aluminum, silicon and lead."

Dr. Saunders says that "propylene glycol and glycerin, the main base ingredients of e-liquids, can cause upper respiratory irritation and may affect the central nervous system. Even though studies show vaping can be an effective nicotine replacement, vapour devices may be less safe."

There was a time when vaping was thought to be a healthier alternative – or at least a less-risky option – than traditional cigarette smoking. But more and more studies are now suggesting that's just not the case. 

Snuff the Puff

"Increasing scientific research is showing us just how damaging vaping can be. Now is the time to take better care of your health and kick the stick, especially for young people, since vaping can open the door to other harmful behaviours, like smoking cigarettes," says Dr. LouAnn Visconti, an ODA Past-President and an orthodontist who works in Timmins, Ont.

If you've been vaping to avoid cigarettes, there are healthier ways to quit both habits. Don't be afraid to start the conversation with your dentist now. They can work with you to figure out a realistic strategy on how to live and stay vape- and smoke-free.

Your dentist can also give you helpful tips on how to deal with cravings.

Hint: Chewing sugarless gum is a great way to shift your focus and keep your mouth busy when you're hankering for a puff.

References available on page 36.