



WELLBEING

# E-cigarettes Under Fire

*Cheaper and less harmful than conventional cigarettes, the electronic 'vape' variety is growing in popularity – so could they help you kick your smoking habit for good?*

*Seven years after* England became the last part of the UK to introduce a ban on smoking in enclosed public places, just over ten million Brits still smoke. Statistically, this means that five million of them will die from a smoking-related disease or illness.

Given these odds, it seems little wonder that vape or electronic cigarettes – a cheaper and less harmful way of getting the same nicotine fix – are fast growing in popularity, and A-listers including Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Moss, Lily Allen and Cheryl Versini-Fernandez have all been seen with them. But are they really a safer bet?

One person convinced that they are is Dr Christian Jessen of TV's *Embarrassing Bodies* and *Supersize Vs Superskinny* fame, who says vaping is the best way for smokers to kick the habit. "Giving up smoking is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health. But it is extremely difficult and the tools we have traditionally used are fairly ineffective. Patches and gum deliver this slow, steady drizzle of nicotine, the drug that smokers are addicted to, rather than the sudden hit smokers crave," he tells HELLO!

"Then along came e-cigarettes and, for me, it was a no brainer. Here was a system that could deliver nicotine without any of the 4,000-plus carcinogens, tar and toxins that cigarette smoke contains. It mimics – pretty much identically – the actions of smoking, along with the rituals associated with it, which smokers also love. Consequently, it is the most effective way we have to stop people from smoking."

And he is not the only expert who thinks so. According to public health charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), 17.7 per cent of ex-smokers are now using e-cigarettes, a figure that has risen dramatically from just 2.7 per cent four years ago. More than seven out of ten e-smokers said that they used the cigarette substitutes to quit smoking altogether, while just under half viewed them as a means of staying away from tobacco.

"My advice to patients is to give up smoking; they can try cold turkey and if they succeed then good on them, but if not then try e-cigarettes, as they are the best alternative,"

says Dr Jessen. "They can then step the amount of nicotine they have down; however I don't stress this as being important because nicotine is not detrimental to the body – you can be addicted to it your whole life just as many people are addicted to caffeine."

Battery-operated, e-cigarettes work by heating the liquid nicotine so that it vapourises and can be inhaled. There are no harmful tars or nasty additives and e-cigarettes work out cheaper than conventional smoking. Not everyone is convinced, however. Last month the World Health Organisation (WHO) called for a ban on the use of e-cigarettes indoors and warned that the vapour could harm bystanders. Dr Jensen described the report on Twitter as "madness" and a spokeswoman from ASH also expressed concern, calling for any regulation to be proportionate. "Although we cannot be sure that electronic cigarettes are completely safe, as the WHO acknowledges, they are considerably less harmful than smoking tobacco," she said.

**TOXIC CLAIMS**

Other critics refer to a small-scale study in the US that concluded that because the particles are much smaller when vapourised, they can travel deeper into the lungs.

But Dr Jessen is quick to dismiss these concerns. "People don't understand the subject; they misread headlines and misunderstand the role that vaping can have in getting people to quit smoking," he tells us. "The arguments over particulate size are nonsense, because the particles in e-cigarettes are not harmful. If you live in a polluted city you are breathing toxins that are far more worrying for your health."

So far, fears that flavouring nicotine with caramel, for example, might make it more tempting to children have proved unfounded, says Dr Jessen. But he does believe it is important that the e-cigarettes should be produced by "reputable companies" and available at "trusted high street pharmacists".

As it currently stands, the Department of Health is planning to ban the sale of e-cigarettes to children under 18, and is bringing in new measures to change the way they are regulated, introducing controls for production quality.

And for the moment, if you do decide to switch to vaping, it is difficult to know where you can indulge in your habit. E-cigarettes are not covered by smoking legislation – however at present the devices are banned in most restaurants, all airlines and many pubs. So you will need to check before firing up. **H**

• For more information visit [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk) and search for e-cigarettes.

**VAPOUR TRAILS**

Spotted at the races and award ceremonies globally, the A-list are all vaping on the latest electronic smoking devices...



Leonardo DiCaprio



Christina Milian



Lily Allen



Gemma Arterton

**PUFF PIECES**

• **Breathe easy** A firm fan of vaping as a way to give up harmful traditional cigarettes, Dr Jessen recommends visiting a reputable local chemist to find a brand you can trust. Puritane is the first vape cigarette range to be available from Boots and comes in four strengths, even nicotine-free. From £7.99, visit [puritane.co.uk](http://puritane.co.uk) or your local Boots branch.



• **The ex factor** According to figures released by ASH, there are now more ex-smokers in Britain than smokers. While 22 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women identify themselves as smokers, 27 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women say they have quit the habit.



• **Supermodel smokes** Known for her nicotine habit, Kate Moss is now blazing a vape trail. The model has visited the Vape Emporium in London, where she bought a Platinum Vape Kit, £39.95, and Gold Vape Kit, £19.99. Visit [vapeemporium.com](http://vapeemporium.com).

