

## Tobacco Free Florida Statement Regarding Electronic Cigarettes

The emergence of electronic cigarettes (also known as e-cigarettes, vapors, vaporizers, or nicotine vaporizers) has triggered a flood of questions regarding the safety of these devices, their role as a possible tool to quit smoking, and the risks they pose to children and teens. While the makers of e-cigarettes claim they are safe, there is uncertainty as to whether e-cigarettes are a safe alternative to smoking and Floridians should be very cautious. Until e-cigarettes are deemed safe and of acceptable quality by a competent national regulatory body, the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida advises consumers not to use these products.

There is currently no peer-reviewed independent research in any credible medical or scientific journal to support industry claims about the safety of e-cigarettes, or their potential to help smokers quit. Supporters of the product point to e-cigarettes ability to deliver nicotine to users without many of the more than 7,000 chemicals in a regular, burned cigarette.<sup>1</sup> Still, preliminary research from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) revealed that some e- cigarettes contain toxic substances and carcinogens, which are known to cause cancer. <sup>2</sup>

Tobacco Free Florida is concerned that, in addition to their possibly harmful effects, e-cigarettes may become a tool used to get youth and young adults hooked on nicotine, which is a highly addictive, dangerous chemical.<sup>3</sup> Many e-cigarette brands offer their products in fruit and candy flavors that are especially enticing to young people, and they're easily available online, at mall kiosks or at local retailers. Furthermore, e-cigarette brands are advertising on TV, which tobacco companies have been banned from doing for years.

According to the FDA, e-cigarette makers cannot legally claim that their products help smokers with nicotine addiction because their safety and effectiveness have not been proven. <sup>4</sup> Yet, many e-cigarette ads openly violate this restriction, causing concern that they are not interested in public safety. **On April 25, 2011, the FDA announced that it would regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products and not as a drug or device, a decision that reflects our current understanding of e-cigarettes intended use.** <sup>5</sup> To date, the FDA has not asserted its authority over e-cigarettes and they remain unregulated.

There are important questions about e-cigarettes that remain unanswered. Some of these questions include:

- Do they encourage former smokers and current smokers who are trying to quit to reignite their nicotine addiction?
- By using e-cigarettes inside places where they wouldn't have normally smoked, current and former smokers may be increasing the amount of nicotine they're consuming. Consequently, could e-cigarettes increase a person's nicotine dependence?
- Are current smokers using them to quit or to circumvent smoke-free indoor air laws?
- How are they affecting people who have never smoked?

Without scientific evidence from credible sources, Tobacco Free Florida cannot endorse e-cigarettes as a beneficial step for smokers who are attempting to quit.

For smokers looking for an effective way to quit, the best plan is to talk to your health care provider or seek help from a qualified Quit Coach. Additionally, there are nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) and other quit aids that are approved by the FDA to help tobacco users quit and have been scientifically proven effective as part of a quit plan. These include: FDA-approved over-the-counter NRTs like the patch, gum and lozenges; FDA-approved prescription non-nicotine medications; and FDA-approved prescription NRTs such as the nicotine inhaler and nasal spray.

Tobacco users in the state also have access to free and convenient help in quitting through Tobacco Free Florida. Tobacco users in the state who want to quit are encouraged to use one of the program's three ways to quit. For more information, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/howtoquit](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/howtoquit).

Comprehensive scientific testing from credible sources is the only path to understanding the possible benefits and risks associated with e-cigarettes. Tobacco Free Florida will continue to monitor research studies as they are released and will update our recommendations as the body of scientific evidence strengthens.

### What the Public Health Community is saying about E-Cigarettes:

This is an unproven device and we know very little about its long-term health effects. E-cigarettes are probably less harmful than combustible cigarettes, [but] we don't have data to say that and can't talk about long-term effect.”<sup>6</sup>

- Jennifer Pearson, PhD, MPH, Research Investigator at the Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies at Legacy

“E-cigarettes may have the potential to make an important contribution to public health by helping some smokers stop. They are not likely to be a magic bullet any more than other quit smoking tools have been, at least to date. But their safety and effectiveness, their potential to keep some smokers from quitting, and possibly encourage young people to start smoking, require both investigation and thoughtful behavior and commentary by those on either side of this issue.”<sup>7</sup>

- Thomas J. Glynn, MA, MS, PhD, Director of Cancer Science and Trends and Director of International Cancer Control for the American Cancer Society

“The electronic cigarette is not a proven nicotine replacement therapy. WHO has no scientific evidence to confirm the product's safety and efficacy. Its marketers should immediately remove from their web sites and other informational materials any suggestion that WHO considers it to be a safe and effective smoking cessation aid.”<sup>8</sup>

- Dr. Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General of WHO's Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health Cluster

“Studies have shown that e-cigarettes can cause short-term lung changes that are much like those caused by regular cigarettes. But long-term health effects are still unclear. This is an active area of research, and the safety of these products is currently unknown. We do know that e-cigarettes can lead to nicotine addiction, especially in young people who may be experimenting with them, and may lead kids to try other tobacco products, many of which are known to cause life-threatening diseases.”<sup>9</sup>

- American Cancer Society, “Questions About Smoking, Tobacco, and Health”

“The current lack of available research on e-cigarettes and the potential health risks posed by the use of these products, both to the user and to the people around them, is of grave concern. The burden of proof rests on the manufacturers of e-cigarettes to demonstrate that their products are safe. At this time, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights recommends that e-cigarettes not be used in areas where people will be exposed to the vapors they emit.”<sup>10</sup>

- Americans for Nonsmokers' Right, “Electronic Cigarettes are NOT a safe alternative!”

## References

1 <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/expertvoices/post/2011/05/03/electronic-cigarettes-e28093-boon-bane-blessing-or-boondoggle.aspx>

2 <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm173146.htm>

3 [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm)

4 <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/2010/ucm225224.htm>

5 <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm252360.htm>

6 <http://www.webmd.com/smoking-cessation/news/20120720/are-e-cigarettes-here-to-stay>

7 <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/expertvoices/post/2011/05/03/electronic-cigarettes-e28093-boon-bane-blessing-or-boondoggle.aspx>

8 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr34/en/index.html>

9 <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/tobaccocancer/questionsaboutsmokingtobaccoandhealth/questions-about-smoking-tobacco-and-health-e-cigarettes>

10 <http://www.no-smoke.org/learnmore.php?id=645>