



Swiss association
for tobacco control



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ADDICTION | SUISSE



Blaues Kreuz Schweiz
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Schweizerische Gesundheitsligen-Konferenz
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Joint statement

by Swiss health and anti-smoking organisations on electronic cigarettes

Berne, September 1, 2024

Smoking kills. Helping people avoid beginning to use tobacco and nicotine products, and supporting those who want to quit, is an absolute priority.

This document aims to set out our collective evaluation of the situation regarding the harmful consequences and the "advantages" of using electronic cigarettes (Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, ENDS): these are made up of a battery, an atomiser, a container for the liquid which is vaporised, and a mouthpiece.¹ New ones are constantly being developed, and they can vary considerably in their conception and in the composition of the liquids they contain. This document is addressed to both professionals and the wider public.

In Switzerland, e-cigarettes have been available in stores for a little over ten years. More and more consumers seem to enjoy them, and many people report using them (whether or not they also smoke cigarettes). National regulation concerning them is, to date, sadly missing. Solid data on the changing behaviour of smokers is also unavailable.

There are still many things that we don't know about electronic cigarettes. While most contain nicotine, an addictive substance, it is estimated that they are less harmful to users' health than tobacco. As far as we know currently, aerosols from e-cigarettes contain fewer toxic and cancer-causing substances than cigarette smoke, but no one knows how much the risk is reduced long-term. More independent studies are needed to determine this. However, until there is clear evidence of known or new long-term risks, the principle of caution applies. That said, switching from traditional cigarettes to electronic cigarettes can be justified in certain clearly defined situations.

Using electronic cigarettes without quitting smoking (double use) offers no health benefits. Anyone who is using both should be encouraged to stop smoking as quickly as possible.

Distinguish "new smoker" products from "quit smoking" products

Risk of starting smoking:	Access to electronic cigarettes needs to be strictly regulated in the interest of public health (see point 5, following page); they are not products that minors, non-smokers, or former smokers should use. Nor should they be used by women who are pregnant or nursing.
Smoking cessation aids:	We consider that the only potential benefit of electronic cigarettes is that they can - in some cases - be an intermediate stop in smoking cessation (implying sales only in certain regulated circumstances)

The declarations made here about electronic cigarettes regarding the risk of attracting new smokers also apply to other products based on oral tobacco or nicotine, such as snus or nicotine pouches.

Our most important messages

1. *Our message to smokers:* Try to quit, for the sake of your health and well-being, as well as for the good of those close to you (second-hand smoke). Smoking cessation aids with proven effectiveness are available on the website www.stopsmoking.ch. The helpline Quit Smoking Helpline gives free advice in all four national languages and eight other languages at the following number: 0848 000 181. In addition, every canton offers smoking cessation help. If these services don't help you quit, then e-cigarettes may help.
2. *Our message to health professionals and addiction professionals:* When people who smoke come to see you, give them information about the main resources for quitting smoking and counsel them on which method(s) might be most effective in their situation. Help from specialists, together with medication, is the most effective means of helping smokers quit.² But it is also important to support those who choose to use electronic cigarettes as a means of quitting.
3. *Our message to non-smokers:* Nicotine is a powerfully addictive substance. All tobacco and nicotine products, in any form, are harmful to your health. Continue to avoid smoking.
4. *Our message to the tobacco and nicotine industry:* We reject any dialogue with an industry which promotes harmful products, which has lied to the public and to public health authorities for decades, and which constantly seeks to make new generations of smokers dependent on nicotine (one of the most addictive substances known).³
5. *Our message to political leaders:* Create the legal framework necessary so that children and adolescents are no longer exposed to the temptations of the tobacco and nicotine industry. Tobacco- and nicotine-based products (including electronic cigarettes without nicotine)
 - must not be sold to minors,
 - must be subject to broad restrictions in all areas of publicity and marketing,⁴
 - must not contain any characterising flavour,
 - must not be offered as disposable devices (e.g. as disposable e-cigarettes),⁵
 - must be taxed uniformly as a smoking and nicotine addiction prevention measure,⁶
 - must be sold only at approved points of sale,⁷
 - must be subject to regulation regarding second-hand smoke,
 - must carry large warnings

Written by the Swiss Association for tobacco control and approved by:

- Addiction Switzerland
- Alliance pour la santé en Suisse ("Healthy Switzerland")
- Croix-Bleue Suisse
- Geliko Swiss Conference of Health Leagues
- Swiss Cancer League
- Swiss Lung League

¹ For heated tobacco products (for example, IQOS®), the recommendations for tobacco products also apply.

² Medication treatments including nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), varenicline (Champix®), bupropion (Zyban®) and behavioural support.

³ Art. 5.3 of the International Anti-Smoking Convention Framework (CCLAT) : « in defining and applying their public health policies regarding anti-smoking measures, the Parties will ensure that these policies are not influenced by commercial or other interests of the tobacco industry, in conformity with national legislation. »

⁴ For example, by using «Plain packaging».

⁵ The European Union's Tobacco Products Directive (2014/40/EU) prohibits products with a characterising flavour and additives that increase the addictive potential or toxicity or have CMR properties (CMR = carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic).

⁶ The tax on tobacco a) takes into account the potential risk of disease and of addiction, based on evidence, b) respects international recommendations, et c) ensures that minimum prices are high, which will dissuade children and young people in particular from buying tobacco.

⁷ Tobacco products and electronic cigarettes must be sold at different points of sale.