

Smoke-Free Communities:

Casey Williams, Assistant Director for the Healthy Communities Partnership Tobacco Free Initiative, recently sat down with Lindsay Grace, Manager of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in Indiana, to find out more on the topic of electronic cigarettes.

Casey Williams: *What is known about the liquid used in e-cigarettes?*

Lindsay Grace: These products are unregulated by the FDA, so we don't know what is in each different manufacturer's product. The testing is still inconclusive because they are such a new product. We have been testing regular tobacco for over 50 years, but the testing that the FDA has done on e-cigarettes is very limited. An initial study conducted by the FDA found they do indeed contain carcinogens and toxic chemicals, one being diethylene glycol, a substance also found in antifreeze. Further research has shown some brands even include heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and tobacco specific nitrosamines - ingredients known to cause cancer in humans.

CW: *So this is not a harmless water vapor as the advertisements claim?*

LG: That's correct; there is no evidence that shows it is safe for users to inhale or for nonusers to inhale secondhand. The American Lung Association advocates for electronic cigarettes to be included in smoke-free air ordinances. There is also the compliance issue with them potentially violating existing smokefree air laws because it can be confusing to workers and the general public when someone is using something that looks very similar to a regular cigarette.

CW: *Should the e-cigarette be recommended to help people quit smoking?*

LG: No, in fact electronic cigarette manufacturers cannot legally say they are a cessation device and have been fined by the FDA if they do make these claims. What we are finding is that individual retailers and vape shops are making these claims to the consumer. Studies are showing that smokers aren't quitting when they use these products. They are dual using both the e-cigarette and regular cigarettes. The promotion of unapproved cessation products steers users from what we know works to help people quit such as nicotine replacement therapy, Chantix and Zyban.

CW: *Would you recommend an e-cigarette as a harm reduction product?*

LG: We need to be treating addiction from a science based perspective. Would you tell a heroin addict to snort instead of shoot because it is less harmful? Would you tell an alcoholic to switch from hard liquor to beer? No. The safest way is for people to quit is to quit using tobacco all together, and use one of the 7 FDA approved medications to do so.

CW: *Who is the target for e-cigarette marketing?*

LG: Based on a recent CDC study, youth use of e-cigarettes has doubled in just one year. With flavors like cotton candy, peach cobbler and vanilla, who do you think they are really targeting? They are looking to addict a life-long tobacco user. Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes can have television commercials, sponsorships and ads in youth oriented magazines due to a lack of regulation. We know the tobacco industry still targets children, but they at least have some guidelines restricting their promotion. E-cigarettes have no guidelines; you could see it advertised during the Super Bowl.

CW: *Can we trust any of the advertising claims made by electronic cigarette manufacturers?*

LG: We can't. The public has to remember these companies are the same as big tobacco. They have the same strategies. It is not their goal to get you to quit using. The e-cigarette, Mark 10, which is currently being test-marketed in Indiana is owned by Altria, the Phillip Morris conglomerate. Big Tobacco companies have their own electronic cigarette brands on the market. They don't want you to quit using tobacco by any means; they want you to use a product that keeps you addicted. We need to keep in mind that this is the same industry that said in a congressional hearing that cigarettes are not addictive and that light cigarettes were safer. We need to remember who is delivering this message. It is the tobacco industry who is trying to sell a product and keep people addicted, not help anyone quit. That is the bottom line.

CW: *Thank you for enlightening us on a hot topic. Where can we go for further public health information on this issue?*

LG: The American Lung Association's website at www.lung.org or the FDA's website at www.fda.gov.

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1.800.QUIT.NOW
 Indiana's Tobacco Quitline
QuitNowIndiana.com