



smoking in pregnancy
challenge group ●

Use of
**electronic
cigarettes**

before, during
and after pregnancy

Key messages for health
professionals working with
pregnant women and their babies



Key Messages

This document is a summarised at-a-glance version of the 'Guide for maternity and other healthcare professionals' which can be found on the Challenge Group website, along with an infographic for pregnant women.

- » E-cigarettes (vapes) are **much less harmful** to health than tobacco.
- » Smoking during pregnancy can harm the baby in the womb **from day one**. Stopping smoking is one of the best things a woman and her partner can do to protect the health of their baby through pregnancy and beyond.
- » While licensed nicotine replacement (NRT) products are the recommended option, if a pregnant woman chooses to use an e-cigarette to help her quit smoking and stay smokefree, **she should be supported to do so**.
- » Using an e-cigarette without stopping smoking does not provide health benefits; anyone who is using both should be strongly encouraged to stop smoking as soon as they can.
- » There is no reason to believe that using an e-cigarette would compromise breastfeeding. Women who vape following birth should not be discouraged from doing so if it enables them to stay quit and maintain a smokefree home.
- » For data recording purposes, a woman who has stopped smoking completely and switched to vaping is classified as a **non-smoker**.
- » Using an e-cigarette can be much cheaper than smoking in the long term.



Potential questions & suggested responses

Q. What are e-cigarettes?

A. E-cigarettes, also called vapes, are designed for users to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than smoke. They work by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol and vegetable glycerine, and flavourings. **They do not contain tobacco.**

Q. How safe are e-cigarettes?

A. E-cigarettes carry only a small fraction of the risk of smoking. They do not contain carbon monoxide (CO) or many of the other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes, though they are not risk free.

Q. What about the risks from nicotine?

A. The great majority of the harm from smoking comes from inhaling tobacco smoke. While it is nicotine that makes tobacco so addictive, it is relatively harmless on its own.

Q. Can I use an e-cigarette to help me quit smoking?

A. If you are pregnant and you smoke, quitting is the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby. Evidence shows that e-cigarettes are effective at helping people quit smoking, particularly when combined with support from a stop smoking specialist.

Q. Can I get an e-cigarette on prescription?

A. There are currently no e-cigarettes with a medicinal licence available on the UK market, meaning they cannot be prescribed by GPs or other healthcare professionals. If you want to give e-cigarettes a go, it's a good idea to visit a specialist vape shop.

CO from tobacco cigarettes is especially dangerous during pregnancy. It deprives the baby of oxygen, slows its growth and development, and increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth and sudden infant death.

Q. I've been using an e-cigarette to help me stop smoking – now I'm pregnant, should I stop using it?

A. If you feel able to stop vaping or to switch to NRT without going back to smoking then you could try to do so. However, if you think stopping vaping is likely to cause you to relapse into smoking, you should continue to vape.

Q. Is secondhand vapour from e-cigarettes harmful to pregnant women?

A. There is currently **no evidence of harm to bystanders from exposure** to e-cigarette vapour and any risks are likely to be extremely low. Exposure to secondhand smoke from cigarettes during pregnancy increases the risk of stillbirth, miscarriage and sudden infant death (SIDS).

Q. Can I use an e-cigarette if I'm breastfeeding?

A. If vaping is helping you to quit smoking and stay smokefree, you should carry on with it, including while breastfeeding. Based on the available evidence on e-cigarette safety there is no reason to believe that using an e-cigarette would compromise breastfeeding.

This document has been endorsed by the following member organisations of the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group:

