



World Health  
Organization

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# **ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES**

## **Call to action**

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## Electronic cigarettes: call to action

E-cigarettes<sup>1</sup> with nicotine are highly addictive and are harmful to health. Globally, the market is growing rapidly, with a large diversity of products and attractive flavours, aggressively marketed targeting children and young people. This has driven widespread use of these products among younger children and adolescents with rates exceeding adult use in many countries.

E-cigarettes are often promoted as a less harmful alternative to conventional cigarettes; however, to date, the commercialization (sale, importation, distribution, or manufacture) of e-cigarettes as consumer products has not been proven to have had a net benefit for public health. Instead, alarming evidence on their adverse population health effects is mounting.

Urgent measures are necessary to prevent uptake of e-cigarettes and counter nicotine addiction alongside a comprehensive approach to tobacco control, and in light of national circumstances.

**Where countries ban sale of e-cigarettes**, they should ensure strong implementation, including monitoring and surveillance measures that support a real-time view of uptake and patterns of use, complementary measures such as prohibiting advertising, promotion and sponsorship (including digital marketing), and effective enforcement measures.

**Where countries permit commercialization of e-cigarettes as consumer products**, strong regulation is necessary. This includes, at a minimum:

- Regulating e-cigarettes to reduce their appeal and their harm to the population, including by:
  - **Banning all flavouring agents**, including menthol and synthetic menthol analogues
  - **Prohibiting attractive and/or promotional features related to the presentation and packaging of the products**, such as colours or colouring properties, attractive descriptors, including names
  - **Regulating features that enable the user to manipulate the product**, post-sale
  - **Limiting the concentration and quantity of nicotine**, to reduce the risk of dependence
  - **Setting a maximum volume for e-cigarette cartridges**, to limit toxicants exposure and use
  - **Setting a maximum battery power**, to limit the influence of power on nicotine and toxicant delivery
  - **Prohibiting device features that permit transmission of information to and from third parties (including manufacturers)**, such as connections to smartphone apps, that could be used to collect personal information, details of use topography, or to remotely control the product
  - **Prohibiting additives** that have carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic properties

<sup>1</sup> The term e-cigarettes is used here in reference to a broader range of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS), such as e-pipes, e-shishas and e-cigars). For the avoidance of doubt, all ENDS and ENNDS (i.e. including e-liquids and devices) fall within the scope of this call to action.

- Protecting the public from misleading or deceptive claims, such as false claims on safety or efficacy for quitting cigarette smoking.
- Prohibiting sale of e-cigarettes to children, controlling the supply chain to reduce the risk of children gaining access and enforcing these restrictions against responsible entities.
- Applying tobacco control measures to e-cigarettes, including the supply and demand reduction measures of the WHO FCTC.
- Strengthening monitoring and surveillance so that governments have a real-time view of the uptake of e-cigarettes and patterns of use (including dual and poly use with cigarettes and other tobacco products) to guide regulatory action.
- Strengthening enforcement to ensure that the measures above are effective.
- Sharing information regarding the harmful effects of e-cigarette use with the public.

**Irrespective of whether countries ban sale of e-cigarettes or permit commercialization as consumer products**, these actions should be taken in conjunction with measures to motivate and assist existing users of tobacco products to quit tobacco use using proven methods.

**Cessation strategies should be based on the best available evidence of efficacy**, synergistic with other tobacco control measures and subject to monitoring and evaluation. Based on the current evidence, it is not recommended that governments permit sale of e-cigarettes as consumer products in pursuit of a cessation objective. Any government pursuing a smoking cessation strategy utilizing e-cigarettes should control the conditions under which the products are accessed to ensure appropriate clinical conditions and regulate the products as medicines (including requiring marketing authorization as medicines). The decision to pursue a smoking cessation objective, even in such a controlled form, should be made only after considering national circumstances, along with the risk of uptake and after exhausting other proven cessation strategies.

The call to action is based on WHO's assessment of available evidence, particularly the growing body of evidence on uptake by children, adolescents, and non-smokers. WHO will continue to monitor and evaluate evidence, as necessary.

