

## What is an electronic cigarette and what's it for?

An electronic cigarette (or 'ecig') is an electronic device that vapourises a liquid solution ('eliquid') into an aerosol mist, simulating the act of tobacco smoking. Some look like tobacco cigarettes, but there is a wide variety of choices to appeal to individual smokers.



Fig.1 Electronic cigarette models



Fig.2 Eliquid bottle  
(brand identification removed)

The eliquid typically contains very low concentrations of pharmaceutical grade nicotine, usually between 0% and 3.6% (0mg/ml to 36mg/ml). One cartridge can contain the equivalent of a whole packet of cigarettes, so the amount of nicotine is consumed over a similar period of time. There are very strict regulations for the packaging and labelling of eliquid, including child-proof bottles and specific risk and safety phrases, as well as hazard warnings.

Crucially, electronic cigarettes do not produce the same toxic smoke as tobacco cigarettes, which is what causes the health damage from smoking. Since there are no products of combustion to be inhaled, experts estimate ecigs to be about 99.9% safer than continuing to smoke.

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*"If all the smokers in Britain stopped smoking cigarettes and started smoking e-cigarettes we would save 5 million deaths in people who are alive today. It's a massive potential public health prize." Professor John Britton, CBE*

Millions of smokers all over the EU are using ecigs to replace some or all of their tobacco cigarettes.

## Are electronic cigarettes safer than continuing to smoke?

When it comes to the safety of electronic cigarettes, this is the key question of interest – and the answer is a resounding 'yes'. The general safety of the products, in terms of their being fit for purpose, and of sufficient quality is robustly covered by the General Products Safety Directive, together with various other regulatory instruments. Indeed, some experts believe they may be safe in absolute terms, too.

*"It is very safe relative to cigarettes, and also safe in absolute terms on all measurements we have applied."*  
Dr Murray Laugesen\*

\* For a collation of the scientific research relating to electronic cigarettes, please visit [www.ecita.org.uk](http://www.ecita.org.uk)

# Why changing electronic cigarettes into medicines won't work

*Turning ecigs into medicinal products would 'break' them.*

A fundamental basis of medicinal regulation is controlled dosage. Ecigs do not have controlled dosage any more than tobacco cigarettes do. Changing ecigs to give them controlled dosage would reduce their appeal, making them less attractive for smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit. (This stubbornly remains at around one fifth of the population, despite the best efforts of governments and public health groups.) Turning ecigs into medicinal products would 'break' them.

## Proposed revisions to the Tobacco Products Directive



The European Commission has now published its long-awaited proposal for revisions to the Tobacco Products Directive (TPD). The Commission recognises that electronic cigarettes fall outside the scope of the TPD. However, the proposed revisions suggest that electronic cigarettes above 0.4% (4mg/ml) should be reclassified as medicinal products, and subject to the Medicines Directive 2001/83/EC.

As indicated overleaf, since medicinal regulation is not an option, such a reduction would render these products utterly useless and we would not be able to save the 5 million people Professor Britton mentioned.

**Do we save 5 million people, or allow them to die?**

*"...the inclusion of electronic cigarettes in the proposed revisions may be legally flawed"*

Recent legal advice to the Electronic Cigarette Industry indicates that the inclusion of electronic cigarettes in the proposed revisions to the TPD may be "legally flawed". This may well result in the Directive's revisions being delayed. To expedite the revisions being ratified and passed into law, electronic cigarettes should be removed, since they are neither tobacco products nor medicines.

*"The death and disability toll from cigarette smoking is far too high not to be doing all that we can. The rise of a consumer movement, as I understand almost entirely consisting of ex-smokers, supporting the use of e-cigarettes is the first social-level evidence that there might now be substitutes for cigarettes that will be readily taken up by smokers. These and other strategies should be actively considered."*

(Professor Ron Borland, Nigel Gray Distinguished Fellow in Cancer Prevention at Cancer Council Victoria)

*Please help us to ensure that electronic cigarettes, properly regulated as consumer products, remain widely available – for the millions of smokers who have already switched, and the future smokers who may be able to. Thank you.*