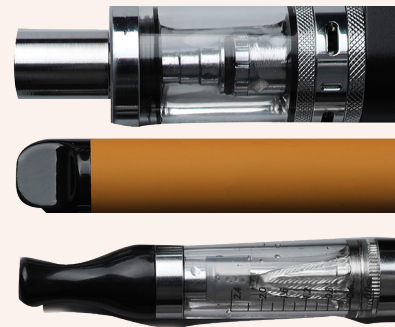


# Electronic cigarettes (E-cigarettes)

## Key messages

- 1 Use of e-cigarettes is growing rapidly, especially among children and young people.
- 2 E-cigarettes contain toxic substances that are harmful to people's health, sometimes at levels higher than in tobacco smoke.
- 3 E-cigarettes have not been proven to be effective for smoking cessation at the population level and may lead to ongoing nicotine dependence.
- 4 Member States should consider banning or regulating e-cigarettes alongside a comprehensive approach to tobacco control.



## What are e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are the most common type of electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) and electronic non-nicotine delivery system (ENNDS). E-cigarettes heat a liquid to create aerosols that are inhaled by the user. These so-called e-liquids do not contain tobacco and may or may not contain nicotine. They also typically contain additives, flavours and chemicals that can be harmful to people's health (1).

## The e-cigarette market is growing rapidly

The global market for e-cigarettes is growing rapidly. Since 2018, there has been a significant increase in the size of the global e-cigarette market, from US\$ 7 806 million in 2015 to US\$ 22 349 million in 2022 (2). Countries in the Asia Pacific region are experiencing faster growth of e-cigarette sales than those in other regions (3).

## E-cigarettes are harmful



E-cigarettes emit toxic substances, including carcinogens, and are associated with various health risks such as lung disorders, poisoning, injuries, burns, and negative cardiovascular effects. Exposure to emissions from e-cigarettes also poses risks to bystanders.



ENDS contain nicotine (sometimes at very high levels), a highly addictive substance that can adversely affect the development of the fetus in a pregnant woman as well as negatively affect brain development in children and adolescents.



E-cigarettes come in many varieties and many allow users to customize the products, including increasing nicotine uptake and/or the level of toxicants. Sometimes the level of toxicants reaches higher levels than in tobacco smoke.



Dual use – when people use both conventional cigarettes and e-cigarettes – is common and is as dangerous or likely more dangerous than using only one of these products (2).

## Children and young people are deliberately and aggressively targeted



Devices may resemble a highlighter pen, portable gaming console, wireless earbuds, hand-held two-way radio transmitter or a toy, among other items.

E-cigarettes offer, by far, the most flavours among all nicotine and tobacco products. Many of these flavours are appealing to children. Flavours can increase the general toxicity of the aerosols, mask the harsh taste of nicotine, play a role in product use initiation and serve as a path from experimentation to regular use.

Marketing of e-cigarettes usually relies heavily on social media and influencers. Even brief exposure to e-cigarette content on social media is associated with adolescents' greater intention to use these products, as well as more positive attitudes toward e-cigarettes.

Many e-cigarettes are designed to allow discreet use and are marketed as such. They may resemble lipsticks or watches, making them easier to hide and more difficult to detect or recognize, especially by teachers and parents.

Some forms of e-cigarettes, such as disposable e-cigarettes, which are particularly popular with youth, have increased in size, contain much more nicotine, and are increasingly becoming more affordable and accessible (2).

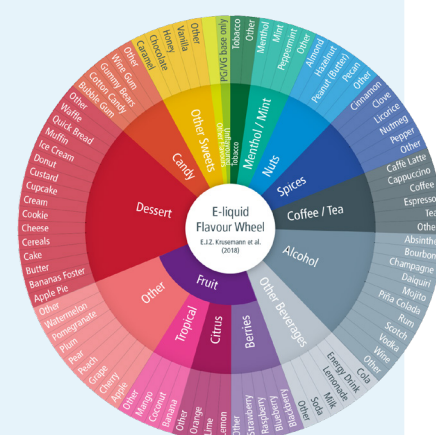


Illustration of the many e-cigarette flavours (3)

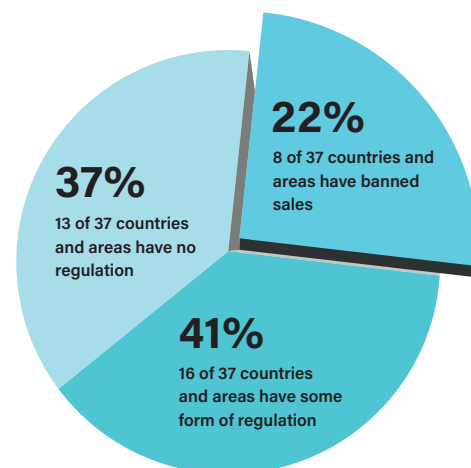
## E-cigarettes used as consumer products

E-cigarettes used as consumer (non-therapeutic) products under real-world conditions, have not been proven to be effective for cessation at the population level. It is not recommended for governments to permit sale of e-cigarettes as consumer products in pursuit of a cessation objective (2).


## Urgent measures are necessary to prevent uptake of e-cigarettes in the Western Pacific Region

In the Western Pacific Region, 24 out of 37 countries and areas have adopted measures that either fully or partially regulate e-cigarettes. These include bans on the use of e-cigarettes in public areas; bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship; requiring health warnings on packaging; age restrictions on the sale of e-cigarettes; and flavouring restrictions. Sale of e-cigarettes has been banned in eight countries and areas in the Region: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Hong Kong SAR (China), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macao SAR (China), Palau, Singapore and Vanuatu. However, 13 countries and areas have no regulation on e-cigarettes. No country in the Western Pacific Region has implemented a ban on flavours of e-cigarettes. Three countries (China, New Zealand and the Philippines) ban only selected flavours or allow specific ones (4).

The WHO publication [Electronic cigarettes: call to action](#), published in December 2023, urges governments to take action to protect children and prevent the uptake of e-cigarettes.



### Where countries ban sale of e-cigarettes:

-  Ensure strong implementation of the ban
-  Monitor and conduct surveillance to support a real-time view of uptake and patterns of use
-  Implement complementary measures such as prohibiting advertising, promotion and sponsorship (including digital marketing), and effective enforcement measures

### Where countries permit commercialization (sale, importation, distribution and manufacture) of e-cigarettes as consumer products:

-  Reduce the appeal and harm to the population (for example, through regulating flavouring agents, attractive features, etc.)
-  Protect the public from misleading or deceptive claims, such as false claims about safety or efficacy for quitting cigarette smoking
-  Prohibit sale of e-cigarettes to children; control the supply chain to reduce the risk of children gaining access; enforce restrictions and hold responsible entities accountable.
-  Apply tobacco control measures to e-cigarettes
-  Strengthen monitoring and surveillance to gain a real-time view of uptake and patterns of use
-  Strengthen enforcement to ensure that measures taken are effective
-  Share information with the public on the harmful effects of e-cigarette use.

### Whether countries ban sale of e-cigarettes or permit commercialization as consumer products:

- 1** Action on e-cigarettes should form part of a comprehensive approach to tobacco control.
- 2** Actions should be taken alongside efforts to help current tobacco users to quit using proven methods.

## References

- 1 Q&A on Tobacco: E-cigarettes. In: World Health Organization [website]. As of 19 January 2024. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/tobacco-e-cigarettes>
- 2 Technical note on Call to action on electronic cigarettes; Geneva: World Health Organization. December 2023. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/technical-note-on-call-to-action-on-electronic-cigarettes>
- 3 WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2021: addressing new and emerging products; Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240032095>
- 4 WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2023: protect people from tobacco smoke. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077164>