

Press release: Regular e-cigarette use remains low among young people in Britain

Regular vaping among young people remains low in Britain and has plateaued among adults, an independent report led by researchers at King's College London and commissioned by Public Health England (PHE) has found.

The report is the first in a new set of 3, commissioned by PHE under the Government's [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#). It looks specifically at the use of e-cigarettes rather than health impacts, which will be the subject of a future report.

The findings show that while experimentation with e-cigarettes among young people has increased in recent years, regular use remains low. Only 1.7% of under-18s use e-cigarettes weekly or more, and the vast majority of those also smoke. Among young people who have never smoked, only 0.2% use e-cigarettes regularly.

Regular e-cigarette use among adults has plateaued over recent years, and remains largely confined to smokers and ex-smokers, with 'quitting smoking' the main motivation for adult vapers.

Professor John Newton, Health Improvement Director at Public Health England, said:

In contrast to recent media reports in the US, we are not seeing a surge in e-cigarette use among young people in Britain.

While more young people are experimenting with e-cigarettes, the crucial point is that regular use remains low and is very low indeed among those who have never smoked.

We will keep a close watch on young people's vaping and smoking habits to ensure we stay on track to achieve our ambition of a smoke-free generation.

Despite e-cigarettes now being the most popular quit aid, just over a third of smokers have never tried one. Only 4% of quit attempts through Stop Smoking Services in England are made using e-cigarettes, despite this being an effective approach.

The report recommends that Stop Smoking Services should do more to encourage smokers that want to quit with the help of an e-cigarette.

Smoking rates in young people have plateaued in recent years, while smoking rates among adults continue to fall, with just under 15% of adults in England

smoking, according to government figures.

A major UK clinical trial, published recently and not included in this PHE report has found e-cigarettes, when combined with face-to-face support, to be up to twice as effective for quitting smoking as other nicotine replacement products, such as patches or gum.

Professor Newton also commented:

We could accelerate the decline in smoking if more smokers switched completely to vaping. Recent new evidence clearly shows using an e-cigarette with Stop Smoking Service support can double your chances of quitting.

But with e-cigarettes currently used so rarely in services, it's time for change. Every Stop Smoking Service must start talking much more about the potential of vaping to help smokers quit.

If you smoke, switching to vaping could save you years of ill health, and even your life.

Professor Ann McNeill, Professor of Tobacco Addiction at King's College London, and lead author of the report said:

We are encouraged that regular vaping among young people in Britain who have never smoked remains low. However, we need to stay vigilant and in particular closely monitor youth smoking.

With just over a third of adult smokers having never tried an e-cigarette, there is a clear opportunity for more smokers to try a method which has helped many others to quit. Smokers should be advised to stop smoking as soon as possible and explore all available options for support, including e-cigarettes.

The report says that combining e-cigarettes with face-to-face support should remain a recommended option available to all smokers. It calls for stop smoking practitioners and health professionals supporting smokers to receive education and training, in the use of e-cigarettes in quit attempts.

Online training is now available, via the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT).

Background

More information can be found in Vaping in England: an evidence update February 2019, and in the previously published 2018 report [E-cigarettes and heated tobacco products: evidence review](#).