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E-cigarettes

Smoking—a proven harmful and deadly habit—is an addiction shared among an estimated 42.1 million adult Americans. Now, more and more smokers, including adolescents, are turning to the increasingly popular electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes. Read on for more information about the risk of e-cigarette use.

What is an e-cigarette?

An e-cigarette is a battery-operated device that converts the liquid chemical propylene glycol, as well as nicotine, flavoring, and other additives, into a vapor that you can inhale. This practice is known as “vaping.”

Who uses e-cigarettes?

As of July 2014, as many as 2.5 million Americans were using e-cigarettes, and these devices have become especially popular in urban areas and among teenagers. Research also shows that in 2013, more than a quarter million middle and high school students who had never before smoked conventional cigarettes had used an e-cigarette—three times as many as in 2011.

What are the risks of e-cigarette use?

Smoking conventional cigarettes is known to lead to a multitude of health problems, as well as dental problems, including gum disease and oral cancer. However, there currently isn't much research on how smoking e-cigarettes may affect your health in the long term.

What experts do know is that if you smoke e-cigarettes, then you are inhaling nicotine, which is highly addictive and the most common form of chemical dependence in the U.S. When it comes to your



oral health, nicotine can harm your teeth and gums, and it also may contribute to gingivitis, dry mouth, and gum disease, among other conditions.

What are recommended alternatives to smoking?

If you're interested in quitting smoking, instead of picking up an e-cigarette, try the following:

- *Ask your health care provider about nicotine replacement therapy.* Nicotine nasal sprays and inhalers are available with a prescription, as are smoking cessation medications like Zyban™ and Chantix®. Speak with your physician if you're interested in trying this type of therapy. Patches, gum, and lozenges to help with smoking cessation also are available over the counter.
- *Reach out.* Quitting smoking often requires support. Find a friend you can count on to help you stick to your

smoking cessation goals. Or, join a support group. Health professionals, such as your dentist or physician, can suggest groups for you to join.

- *Focus on relaxation.* Some people smoke to reduce stress. Instead, try meditation or deep breathing exercises, or take a yoga class.
- *Exercise.* Thirty minutes of physical activity each day may help reduce your desire for a cigarette. So, if you're feeling the urge to smoke, try hitting the gym instead. Quitting smoking is difficult and may take more than one try, so don't become discouraged if you're not completely successful the first time.

If you're already a user of either e-cigarettes or conventional cigarettes, it's never too late to quit. Talk with your dentist or another health care provider for more information.