Are E-Cigarettes for COPD Safe?

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The Risks and Rewards of Switching to Electronic Cigarettes

If you can find an aid that helps you give up cigarettes for good (without causing other damage to your body), it's certainly worth considering. But, despite their evident advantages, electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, may not be as safe for those who suffer from COPD as you might imagine.

Consider both sides of the argument before you decide if e-cigarettes are the right move for you.

How E-Cigarettes Can Help You Cope With COPD

Based on current research and user experience, e-cigarettes may be one of the most effective tools for quitting smoking, especially for long-term addicts.

Some of the biggest benefits e-cigarettes have over medication or quitting cold turkey include:

- **Good at overcoming cravings.** The act of using the e-cigarette, along with the sensation of inhaling a substance and the quick hit of nicotine, is an extremely effective substitute for all the habitual aspects of smoking. Many smokers find they can alleviate their cravings quickly and thoroughly with their e-cigarette.
- **Few side effects.** Other than the typical rush from too much nicotine, e-cigarettes are less likely to cause uncomfortable side effects that prescription drugs and other smoking aids are known for. In fact, it may help you decrease the number of cigarettes you smoke without provoking any withdrawal symptoms.
- **A proven track record.** Although they haven't been around for too long, e-cigarettes have helped many people where other stop smoking aids have fallen short. In a recent case study series, smokers who had repeatedly tried to quit with professional aids were given the e-cigarette, which led to a surprisingly positive response — some of the staunchest smokers were able to stay smoke free for at least six months.

Currently, there are no bans on using e-cigarettes in public spaces, which makes them even more appealing, but it's always a good idea to check before using an e-cigarette in a closed indoor space.

Dangers, Risks and Problems With Electronic Smoking

Before committing to e-cigarettes you may want to ask a few questions to get to the heart of the matter:

- What ingredients are in the liquid? Any recent findings on their adverse effects?
- Can you live with the risk of future side effects?
- How does your doctor feel about vaping with COPD?
- Are certain brands more regulated than others?

One thing to keep in mind is that e-cigarettes still have nicotine, which is an addictive and potentially harmful substance in itself. Recent studies have revealed that nicotine replacement therapy does little to help the majority

of people: most will go back to smoking after trying the patch or chewing gum, and e-cigarettes are typically used as a replacement for tobacco.

Thus, you should honestly consider whether this is a habit you're willing to live with for the rest of your life.

Additionally, there have been some studies that indicate e-cigarettes may not be the best alternative after all, considering these issues with design, control and biological response:

- **Leaky cartridges**. A 2010 study found that some nicotine cartridges leaked, which could lead to a toxic dose of nicotine for the user. Since the cartridges are hidden within the tube of the e-cigarette, it is difficult to know how much nicotine has been inhaled.
- **Fewer controls in place**. Since it's a fairly new product with no evident health threats, the e-cigarette has escaped some of the labeling requirements and data distribution that apply to tobacco products. In turn, the FDA is concerned that e-cigarette users could be inhaling toxic ingredients, or dangerously high levels of nicotine, without knowing it.
- **Pulmonary effects**. Although e-cigarettes don't have nearly as many chemicals as real cigarettes, lung capacity and breathing can suffer during the "smoking" experience. In fact, many people report a sore throat or cough after using the e-cigarette, and the results of one recent study show that the airways were measurably affected after using the e-cigarette for only five minutes.

Unfortunately, there is no smoking cessation aid that is universally effective. On the other hand, the sheer variety of approaches to kicking the habit allows you to develop a very personalized plan of attack. In your case, e-cigarettes could play an important role in your COPD management plan.