

# Using E-cigarettes to Quit Smoking during Pregnancy: Is It Safe?

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I recently received a phone call from Molly. Molly told me that she had just found out that she was pregnant; this was a surprise, but a welcome one. However, Molly confessed that she smokes a pack of cigarettes per day and her doctor recommends that she quit smoking since cigarettes can present a number of hazards for her pregnancy and baby. Molly's friend told her that e-cigarettes were safe in pregnancy and would help Molly with her efforts to reduce use of traditional cigarettes. Molly wanted to be sure. "Don't both cigarettes and e-cigarettes both contain nicotine," she asked?

## **What are e-cigarettes?**

'E-cigarettes' is short for **electronic nicotine delivery system**, sometimes also referred to as vapes, e-hookah, or other slang names. E-cigarettes utilize a device that heats up nicotine-containing fluid from a cartridge, which can then be inhaled as a vapor. Using an e-cigarette does have the potential to avoid some of the hazardous compounds found in traditional cigarettes such as tar and cadmium. However, e-cigarettes are a relatively new product and not very well regulated. Some e-cigarette fluids contain a lot of nicotine while others very little. They often have other substances added to them including preservatives and flavorings. Many of these agents have not been studied regarding their safety in pregnant women.

All of this makes it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about what risk e-cigarettes might present to a pregnant woman and her baby. What we do know is that traditional cigarettes and nicotine (the chemical which is in both tobacco and e-cigarettes) **do** present a risk for a wide number of issues including birth defects (cleft lip and palate), miscarriage, and poor growth in the developing baby. In addition, substituting e-cigarettes for traditional cigarettes is not a proven way to quit smoking, and in some cases, people continue to smoke conventional cigarettes as well as e-cigarettes which makes the exposure to the baby even larger. Scientists are still learning about this, and most public health agencies recommend behavioral approaches as the safest strategy for pregnant women who are trying to quit smoking.

Molly is smart to ask about the safety of e-cigarettes before she uses them. She also shows how much she cares about herself and her baby by trying to decrease smoking as much as possible! I suggested she speak with her healthcare provider about strategies for quitting. I also told her about free services like the CDC's Smoker's Quitline (1-800-784-8669).

MotherToBaby has fact sheets on [e-cigarettes](#), [cigarette smoke](#) and [vaping](#)...

... and people can call (866-626-6847), text (855-999-3525), [email](#), or [chat](#) to speak with a specialist on exposures in pregnancy.

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).**

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