

E-cigarettes spark controversy



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Electronic cigarettes, or “e-cigarettes,” are gaining popularity, especially among young people and those trying to quit smoking. The battery-powered devices simulate cigarette smoking by vaporizing a liquid solution that contains, among other things, nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin and various flavorings.

Unlike conventional cigarettes, they don’t contain tobacco, which creates cancer-causing tar when burned.

But are e-cigarettes really any healthier than traditional cigarettes? The Food and Drug Administration has expressed concerns that e-cigarettes may still expose people to potentially toxic chemical ingredients, and there’s no question that the nicotine in them is still addictive. So far, there hasn’t been enough research to determine what other risks e-cigarettes may carry.

Likewise, there hasn’t been any research yet on their use among people with multiple

sclerosis. In addition, it's unlikely that e-cigarettes will help smokers kick the habit. Instead, early research suggests they may actually promote smoking among people who think e-cigarettes are not harmful to their health.

Amid the current lack of information, more research is needed. The FDA has recently proposed a rule to extend its regulatory authority to e-cigarettes.