

What to Tell Your Patients When They Ask About E-Cigarettes

Clinical Scenarios and Suggested Responses		
Clinical Scenarios	Suggested Response	Comment
The patient has recently stopped smoking, using methods other than e-cigarettes	Congratulate the patient on having stopped smoking cigarettes and monitor for relapse to smoking. If the patient is using pharmacotherapy, it is beneficial to discuss how long the patient feels the need to use the medications and discuss options to wean off medication support.	The patient should be told to avoid using any form of tobacco, including e-cigarettes, since this might trigger relapse back to smoking. Some patients do benefit from the use of cessation medications beyond the 8 - 12 week dosage, so continued use can be justified if the patient feels there is a benefit to helping them refrain from smoking cigarettes. In patients who are still undergoing or recovering from an intensive health treatment, continuing pharmacotherapy – if they achieved smoking cessation – may be reasonable rather than introducing the fear of smoking relapse at a stressful time for the patient.
The patient has recently stopped smoking but reports using an e-cigarette to refrain from smoking	Congratulate the patient on having stopped smoking cigarettes and monitor them for relapse to smoking. Discuss how long the patient feels a need to use the e-cigarette and discuss options to wean off e-cigarettes, including consideration of switching to cessation pharmacotherapy rather than using an e-cigarette.	The patient should be encouraged to wean off e-cigarettes. Clinicians should continue to offer adjunctive smoking cessation support while monitoring for any adverse effects of e-cigarette use.
The patient is still smoking, but is interested in stopping.	Congratulate the patient on being willing to give up smoking cigarettes and offer behavioral counseling and/or pharmacotherapy as appropriate following recommended treatment guidelines for nicotine dependence. E-cigarettes should not be recommended as a cessation therapy.	If the question of e-cigarettes is raised, the patient should be advised that e-cigarettes have not been established to be an effective treatment to stop smoking. A preference for established treatments should be clear.
The patient continues to smoke and is not interested in stopping	The patient should be encouraged to stop smoking cigarettes, using evidence-based methods at every opportunity. Repeated assessments, advice, and providing access to nicotine medications even for patients not ready to quit has been found to increase quit attempts and cessation.	There is no evidence to support e-cigarette use in this scenario. Research is needed in this area to define the actual benefits and harm associated with dual use of e-cigarettes and smoking.