

- E-cigarettes / Smoking

Is vaping as equally harmful as tobacco smoking?

Botswana Guardian · 16 Jun 2023 · 15 · Health Kenneth T. Photlokwe Kenneth T. Photlokwe MSc Medicine – Wits University Facebook: On Health with Kenneth

When vaping and e- cigarettes first hit the market in the mid- 2000s, they were widely marketed – by manufacturers and some professionals in the medical field – as a way to help tobacco smokers quit their smoking habit.



Countries like England and others in the United Kingdom, were in 2021, reported to be thinking about officially prescribing e- cigarettes to help reduce smoking rates among their populations.

However, to this day there is still no conclusive research on whether vaping is actually less harmful than the traditional cigarettes. If anything, the little work that has been done has quite leaned towards the opposite. The number of people, especially youth, that has engaged in vaping has more than doubled since 2013 in areas where such research has been done. The trend seems to be quite the same in Botswana and Africa as we now see more and more people engaging in e- cigarette smoking than before. Almost all entertainment outlets now either sell or hire out vaping service/ equipment for fun lovers using their facilities at the time. Many versions of the e- cigarette category, just like the traditional cigarette, contain nicotine as the primary agent and it is highly addictive.

The kicker is here; e- cigarettes normally contain less concentrations of nicotine as compared to the traditional cigarette, so what happens is that when one takes vaping, it doesn't generate the burn one would get from a traditional cigarette. "This causes the smokers to take a deeper pull and when they take a deeper pull, they establish a higher level of nicotine dependence over time," said Monica Hanna, Assistant Director of the Nicotine and Tobacco Recovery Program, RWJ Barnabas Health's Institute, New Jersey. It's also worth noting that the toxicity of nicotine and some chemicals inhaled from vaping can damage your arteries, inflame your lungs, cause you to crave a smoke and suffer withdrawal symptoms if you ignore the craving. It raises your blood pressure and spikes your adrenaline, which increases your heart rate and the likelihood of having a heart attack. Some studies have even likened the addictive nature of nicotine to be the same as that of heroin and cocaine. There are people who light their vapes even before their feet hit the

ground in the morning when they wake up. Such injuries do not happen immediately. They keep piling on and one starts experiencing complications later in life.

One disturbing discovery of recent is vapers are now starting to demand that the concentration of nicotine in e- cigarettes be increased so that it gives them the same satisfaction as the traditional cigarette. A study that analysed data from vapers between 2013 – 2018 showed that majority of the proportion of total vaping sales (74.7 percent) comprised of higher nicotine concentration e- cigarettes (> 4 percent mg/ ml) and that zero- nicotine e- cigarettes only accounted for less than 1 percent of the e- cigarette market share. This, coupled with the fact that many of the youth these days add even more harmful substances to the vape to increase the intensity of the smoking are two very big causes for concern.