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How to switch from tobacco to electronic cigarettes?

2. JUNE 2014 BY [BERND MAYER](#) — 12 COMMENTS



This post is based on personal experience and hearsay rather than scientific evidence.

Many years of interaction with successful and less successful users of electronic cigarettes make me believe in certain prerequisites for an effective switch from tobacco smoking to the inhalation of nicotine containing vapor. It is a pity to watch people giving up electronic cigarettes on easily avoidable grounds. Therefore, I wish to share my experience with beginners and propose three rules of thumb that may pave the way to a successful and sustained switch.

As a smoker you may wish to stop but be afraid of the well known physical and psychical pain associated with smoking cessation. Maybe you have tried unaided deprivation, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or different kind of pills advertised as cessation aids, all of them with a low level of long-term success. If you put electronic cigarettes in the same category as NRT, you will necessarily be expecting the same pain upon switching.

1st rule: Don't think of electronic cigarettes as smoking cessation tool.

In the beginning you may replace some cigarettes by the electronic version, but still keep smoking. Don't put yourself under pressure! If you feel you need it, smoke cigarettes without a guilty conscience. With the proper hardware and liquid (see below) your urge for tobacco smoking will vanish with time. You will realize that electronic cigarettes resemble the real ones in many aspects, including airway sensation (called flash or throat hit), handling, and the production of smoke-like vapor. Your need to smoke cigarettes will continuously decrease and may be fully absent after a while. And even if not and you become a "dual user," consider that your health condition will benefit from every single cigarette you don't smoke.

2nd rule: Be prepared to spend some time and money to find hardware that fits your personal needs.

There is vast variety of models available, making the appropriate choice difficult for beginners. Smokers often select their first electronic cigarette more or less by chance (or based on the most appealing advertisement) and, if unsatisfied, they blame it to the whole category of "electronic cigarettes" rather than to their model. Therefore, it is essential that you get as much information as possible, not from advertisements but from experienced users that are active in social networks, in particular the large internet fora in the **USA, Germany, UK, Australia** etc. You will have to engage yourself in a topic that is certainly more complex than getting a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

No matter how high your level of prior information, your first experience could still be

disappointing. Personal needs are fairly diverse, and there is no such thing like “the best electronic cigarette.” Instead of giving up you should try another starter set, or another type of atomizer or maybe upgrade to a regulated battery. Don't get put off by the costs! In the beginning, you will probably spend more for electronic cigarettes than you had spent for smoking, but on the long run you will save a large amount of money (besides the more important health gain).

3rd rule: Start with a menthol-flavored high nicotine liquid.

There is no accounting for taste, so the choice of the appropriate liquid(s) is highly subjective. As a beginner, it will probably drive you crazy when a brief internet search reveals liquids with literal hundreds of different flavors that are offered by hundreds of different companies. How can you find out the tastiest liquid? Short answer: you cannot! It is a matter of trial and error! Most users end up with a small selection or even one favourite liquid after a while, but some never stop trying new flavors from various sources.

Regardless, in my opinion there is a rule of thumb that hardly fails: begin with 3-4 different flavors and consider that none of them will taste like your favourite cigarette brand. So tobacco flavors are not necessarily the best choice. Don't hesitate to try some fruit flavors, such as strawberry or orange, and make sure that you have at least one menthol-flavored liquid in your basket. Menthol flavor is a kind of backup if anything else fails. Possibly you wish to combine menthol with a fruit flavor, e.g. strawberry, which is very popular. Anyway, in the beginning there will be no way around some trial and error. If you have a chance, participate at one of the meetings organized in social networks, where you can taste a wide variety of liquids from other users.

The most important issue is probably the nicotine concentration. If the concentration is too low to provide you with enough nicotine, you will get unsatisfied and may return to tobacco smoking. The appropriate concentrations are individually different and depend on the performance of your atomizer: more power results in more vapor and, in turn, more nicotine per draw. As a rule of thumb you should begin with a high nicotine concentration (20-30 mg/ml) and dilute with nicotine-free liquid if necessary.

In the first days you may experience a cough reflex due to increased airway resistance caused by stimulation of nicotinic receptors on sensory C-fibers of the bronchi, an effect that is masked by antitussive agents in tobacco. The coughing

response ceases within a few days and should not seduce you to prematurely reduce the nicotine content of your liquid. Nicotine has no serious adverse effects, and there is no reason to anxiously reduce the amount of nicotine in your liquids.

Flickr Creative Commons Image via Mark Fischer

Filed Under: **Blog**



About Bernd Mayer

Dedicated to science, critical thinking, and scientific education of young people. Fighting pseudoscience and all kind of esoteric junk.

Comments



Norbert Zillatron says

2. June 2014 at 17:50

One more point:

When you want more smoke and nicotine from a cigarette, you simply draw harder.

That won't work with an ecig! Here you have to draw longer.

If you draw harder, you only increase the amount of additional air.

Reply



Patricia Waters says

3. June 2014 at 1:06

Excellent for the uninitiated.

Reply



Chris says

4. June 2014 at 0:40

Another tip: As a beginner, always have a liquid handy (best in an extra device you carry with you) that is at least one step stronger than your normal liquid. So if you are vaping 12mg normally, have a single 18mg or even 24mg liquid ready, preferably in your favorite flavor – or, failing that, menthol or tobacco-ish.

The reason for the stronger liquid: Many vapers have a sudden urge to smoke tobacco cigarettes a couple of weeks after they switched to vaping. It will usually only last a day or two and the stronger liquid is for that exact moment. Just vape the urge away.

@Bernd Thanks for the blog post and your work!

Chris

Reply



Anja M ERF vaper (@anjaffm) says

4. June 2014 at 0:46

Excellent, thank you!

Reply



Steve says

4. June 2014 at 2:30

Great guide, but I would add two other things to this guide. First, as a mental health therapist, I always recommend that people keep their behaviors the same when

transitioning. The best example would be continuing to go outside to “vape.” Over time, that behavior will change to whatever is acceptable for the individual’s environment. Reducing as many changes as possible at first will make the change feel more normal. Second, look into finding a kit that 1. works well and 2. is as low maintenance as possible. If the person can make their electronic cigarette easier to use than getting out their pack of cigarettes, pulling out a cigarette, and lighting it, they will be more likely to reach for it first. Life can be stressful and not everyone wants or has time for complicated electronic cigarettes. An example of this would be a simple tank system where, once set up, they can simply pick it up and use it. I have no real evidence to support those recommendations except my own experience and those around me who I have encouraged to switch, but I feel my logic is sound. Good luck to all of those who read this and decide to take the plunge. It’s worth it.

Reply



Sven Dings says

4. June 2014 at 12:46

I never wanted to stop smoking. I loved it for more than two decades.

But when I got my first eCigarette, I switched 100% from the first day on without any problem. Instead, I got problems to smoke cigarettes. In the past four years of using electronic cigarettes I´ve tried a few times to smoke real ones. I just couldn´t (even though I wanted.....) because of the disgusting taste.

Reply



Papp says

20. June 2014 at 12:33

Thanks a bunch Bernd. This is a truly great article. I am a new vaper (6 weeks now, instantly down to 0.7 a day after almost 40 yrs of smoking) and was lucky – having read your article just now – to follow my instinct and do more or less exactly what you recommend. Vaping is a great invention.

Papp

Reply



jenkinsmark01 says

23. December 2014 at 11:02

I like your three rules of thumb to switch from tobacco to electronic cigarettes. A person should have the will power to quit smoking and switch to vaping. just start with the flavor you like, have will power to quit even if you are not comfortable and you will easily switch to electronic cigarettes.

Reply



Tom says

25. May 2015 at 7:25

Nice information!! I think lots of people will get best solution to switch from tobacco to **best electronic cigarette with the help of your post.**

Reply

Trackbacks

Have you decided to ditch the ciggies at midnight tonight? | bekivapes says:

31. December 2014 at 18:21

[...] is your pacifier; it is stopping you smoking. So use it more than you smoked. Yes I said more. See Bernd-Meyer who is a scientist and knows what he's talking [...]

Reply

Should we switch to electronic cigarettes? | A school of dolphins says:

20. September 2015 at 22:18

[...] I also recommend reading How to switch from tobacco to electronic cigarettes?

– Bernd Mayer [...]

Reply

Quora says:

9. November 2015 at 9:34

What are the subjective differences between smoking cigarettes and vaping?

On the first glance: Not much. But there are quite a lot of subtle differences. Here are a few: The Weight Even the tiniest of those (mostly useless) cig-alikes is makerdly heavier than a cigarette. The real ones (2nd and 3rd gen devices) are much heav...

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Dedicated to science, critical thinking, and scientific education of young people



- Bernd Mayer

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