

MaineHealth

Center for Tobacco Independence

The MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI) was founded over two decades ago to help Mainers become tobacco-free. Our treatment services – including those offered through the Maine Tobacco HelpLine (MTHL) – welcome all individuals who are looking for assistance relating to tobacco use. This treatment is also available to those who wish to quit the use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, which are classified by the FDA and Maine law as tobacco products.

In the past decade, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (or ENDS, variably called e-cigarettes, vape pens, and many other terms, and herein after called “ENDS”) have emerged as an alternative product to traditional combustible and smokeless tobacco. Since introduction, ENDS have evolved in terms of the technology used as well as efficiency of delivering nicotine to the body.

For youth, there is ample and clear evidence that the use of ENDS is associated with significant health concerns. Use of ENDS increases susceptibility to transitioning to use of combustible products, as well as dual use. Further, nearly all ENDS contain nicotine – an addictive substance that interferes with adolescent brain development. Many of these devices also contain flavoring and other additives for which there is growing evidence of additional harm. For these reasons, we do not support the use of ENDS in the adolescent population.

For adults seeking to quit tobacco, the most effective treatment methods have not changed. First-line FDA medications for tobacco treatment include nicotine replacement therapy (including over-the-counter medications such as the patch, gum and lozenge) as well as prescription medications such as varenicline, bupropion and the nicotine nasal spray and nicotine inhaler. When coupled with behavioral interventions such as telephonic counseling, these medications are the most effective and proven method to help individuals become tobacco-free.¹

For adults seeking to quit tobacco, there is a limited evidence base which indicates that ENDS may have some potential to act as a cessation tool in some populations for whom either first-line FDA medications are not effective or those who may only be looking to transition away from combustible products.

There are however ongoing concerns regarding use of ENDS as a treatment tool:

- ENDS are not considered an evidence-based treatment by the US FDA. Unlike first-line treatments with strong safety profiles, no treatment or prescription guidelines exist for ENDS.
- Health risks associated with long-term use of ENDS are unknown, based on their emergence onto the market within the past decade. While there is some reason to believe that ENDS may pose less harm than use of combustible tobacco products, there is also growing evidence of potential harm. In short, more time is needed to determine the health effects of long-term use of ENDS.

Most of the people who are served through the MTHL are looking to quit all tobacco products. If, in the course of treatment provided through the MTHL, a participant states that they wish to use ENDS as a treatment tool, we will support them in their efforts without judgement - but stay consistent with our standard approach to inform participants about the potential risks and benefits of any approach or product they may choose.

¹https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/cessation/index.htm