

healthmatters

Winter 2015

Q & A: The Fiery Debate over Electronic Cigarettes

SOME MANUFACTURERS PROMOTE THEM AS SAFER ALTERNATIVES TO SMOKING. But public health experts express concern about their long-term effects, especially on young people. Here are some answers to your burning questions about e-cigarettes.

WHAT ARE E-CIGARETTES?

These devices deliver nicotine without tobacco. They often look like cigarettes, or sometimes pipes, pens, or lipstick. Typically, e-cigarettes have three parts:

- A cartridge full of liquid, which contains nicotine and other chemicals and flavorings
- A vaporizer that heats up the liquid
- A battery that powers up the vaporizer when you puff on it

Users inhale the vapors from the heated liquid. The process is called “vaping.” And it’s become increasingly popular among people of all ages.

ARE THEY SAFER THAN CIGARETTES?

Experts aren’t certain yet. The vapors contain the same harmful chemicals as tobacco smoke. And e-cigarette users still breathe in nicotine, a highly addictive drug.

In the short term, inhaling the vapors may cause coughing, a sore throat, and other minor complaints. But no long-term studies have yet examined their safety.

Researchers have also raised concerns about secondhand exposure to vapors from e-cigarettes. Some people, including pregnant women and former smokers, could face harm from nicotine in the air. More research is needed to understand these effects, too.

WHAT’S THE BOTTOM LINE?

Because they’re not regulated, it’s hard to know exactly how much nicotine and other chemicals e-cigarettes contain. Doctors have much more to learn about the effects of these devices on the human body and the environment.

In the meantime, experts say, it’s safest not to introduce new chemicals into clean air—or clean lungs. If you’re trying to quit smoking, ask your doctor about methods that have been shown to help, including other nicotine replacement products.



Be a quitter! For more tips on how you can quit smoking, visit Open Airways at www.openairways.com/smokingcessation.html.

Is It a Heart Attack?



WHEN SOMEONE HAS A HEART ATTACK IN A MOVIE, IT'S TOUGH TO MISS: Dramatic, chest-clutching pain strikes hard and fast. But in real life, the signs of a heart attack can be subtle.

POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a heart attack may include one or more of the following:

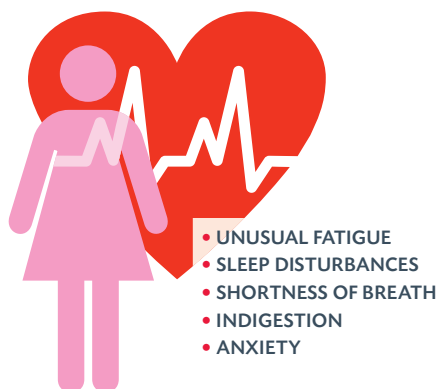
- Chest discomfort that lasts a few minutes or that goes away and returns. You may feel an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, or fullness in the center of the chest that may or may not cause pain.
- Discomfort or pain in other areas of the upper body, spreading to the jaw, neck, back, or one or both arms or shoulders.
- Light-headedness, nausea, weakness, or a cold sweat. Some people experience a sense of impending doom.
- Shortness of breath, often with or just before chest discomfort.

DEADLY DELAYS

Quick medical help for a heart attack can greatly increase your chance for survival. So know the symptoms so you can get care right away.

If you think you may be having a heart attack, call **911** immediately. Every minute counts.

WOMEN'S HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS



Be heart smart. Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death in Bermuda? But there is good news—it is 95% preventable! The CORE Heart Health Center can help you avoid heart problems. For a list of classes, visit the Bermuda Heart Foundation at www.mybermudaheart.bm and click on "Events" or assess your own risk by clicking on "Risks & Causes."

health facts



Get a Flu Shot Now, Stay Healthier Later

Ask anyone who has ever suffered through it: The flu can linger for up to two weeks. That's up to 14 days of fever, cough, body aches, severe headache, and extreme fatigue—not to mention possible complications, such as pneumonia.

To avoid being sidelined by a flu bug this year, get a flu shot.

SAFEGUARD YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU

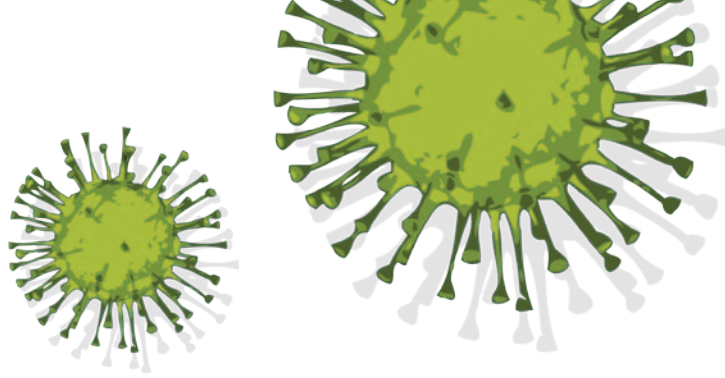
Each year, experts from the FDA, World Health Organization, and CDC study flu virus samples from around the globe. Then they develop a vaccine that protects against the flu viruses that are most likely to circulate in the coming months.

GET VACCINATED TODAY

Consider the toll flu takes on your body and the missed days of work, school, and normal activity—and then schedule your flu shot. Experts recommend the vaccine for everyone ages 6 months and older. It's especially important if you are at high risk for serious flu-related complications. This group includes people who are pregnant or have a chronic medical condition (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), or live with someone who does.



Roll up your sleeve ...
Call your doctor's office to get your flu shot today.



Revenge of the Chickenpox: Are You At Risk for Shingles?

AN OLD FRIEND DIGS UP YOUR GRADE SCHOOL PORTRAIT, COMPLETE WITH FRIZZY HAIR, GLASSES, AND BRACES. One more thing may reappear from your childhood to haunt you: the chickenpox virus, in the form of a painful disease called shingles.

The virus that causes chickenpox, varicella-zoster, never really goes away. It lies dormant and can reemerge in adulthood as shingles, also known as herpes zoster.

A SLEEPING VIRUS AWAKENS

Anyone who's had chickenpox—even children—can get shingles. Older adults face the greatest risk.

Other factors that make you more likely to get shingles include:

- Stress.
- Another illness or injury.
- Diseases or treatments that weaken your immune system. This includes HIV/AIDS and chemotherapy for cancer.

As the virus begins to reboot, a painful, itchy rash usually forms a line or stripe on one side of your body or face. You may also experience chills, headache, fever, fatigue, or nausea.

REDUCE YOUR RISK

For most people, shingles subsides after a few weeks or months with no long-term effects. Medications can speed recovery. But you must take them soon after symptoms begin. Shingles rarely leads to serious complications.

Fortunately, you can take an important step to prevent shingles: Get vaccinated.



Have you gotten your shot?

The CDC recommends the shingles shot for all adults ages 60 and older—but you can get it at age 50. Ask your doctor if it's right for you.

health facts

Tips to Combat Holiday Overeating

Do the holidays put your healthy eating habits to the test? Here's how to enjoy the foods of the season without tipping the scales.

- **Take small portions.** Denying yourself will only lead to frustration.
- **Use a smaller plate.** Your servings will look bigger.
- **Limit alcohol.** Alcohol weakens willpower. And it has calories, too.
- **Delay dessert.** If you wait a while, your craving for sweets may quiet down.
- **Stand away from the food.** The closer you are, the more likely you are to nibble.
- **Focus on family and friends, not food.** It's hard to talk and eat at the same time.
- **Stick to your exercise routine.** Take walks after big holiday meals.



Change Your Diet, Change Your Disease Risk

FOLLOWING A NUTRITIOUS DIET LOWERS YOUR RISK OF HAVING A STROKE OR DEVELOPING HEART DISEASE, CANCER, AND DIABETES. HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO MAKE SMALL, HEALTHY CHANGES.

IN WITH THE GOOD

Over the course of a day, aim to:

- Add more vegetables and fruit to your meals and snacks
- Choose more whole-grain breads, cereals, and pastas
- Replace whole milk, yogurt, and cheese with low-fat or fat-free dairy foods
- Prepare fresh fish more often instead of red meat and poultry
- Use canola, corn, olive, peanut, or soybean oil instead of butter, lard, and other solid fats

OUT WITH THE BAD

Try to eat less food that contains:

- Saturated and trans fat—often found in whole milk, ice cream, butter, chips, cake, cookies, doughnuts, meat with visible fat, mayonnaise, and coconut and palm oil
- Cholesterol—often found in meats, whole milk, and egg yolks
- Sodium—listed in ingredient labels as salt and baking soda
- Added sugar—listed on ingredient labels as corn syrup or sweetener, molasses, malt syrup, glucose, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, lactose, maltose, and fruit juice concentrate



The Benefits of Quitting Smoking: An Hour-by-Hour Timeline

After...

20 minutes

Your blood pressure and heart rate drop to normal.

24 hours

Your risk for sudden heart attack, once higher than average, decreases.

Two weeks to three months

Blood flow improves throughout your body. Your wounds heal more quickly. It's also easier to walk and breathe.

One year

Your risk for heart disease is cut in half.

10 years

Your risks for stroke and lung cancer are similar to those of someone who never smoked.

Eight hours

Levels of carbon monoxide in your blood drop, and your blood oxygen level returns to normal.

48 hours

Damaged nerves repair themselves, restoring your senses of taste and smell.

One to nine months

You'll have more energy and fewer symptoms such as coughing, congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath. Tiny hairlike structures in your lungs called cilia resume clearing mucus, reducing your risk for infections.

Five years

Compared with people still smoking a pack a day, you're half as likely to develop cancer in your mouth, throat, bladder, or esophagus. Your risk for lung cancer falls by nearly 50%.

15 years

You're now no more likely to develop heart disease than if you'd never lit a cigarette.

www.bfm.bm

BF&M Overseas Healthcare Toll-Free Helpline

BF&M Medical Assistance is available 24/7 with our toll-free numbers:

- 1-888-674-1367 (from Bermuda)
- 1-877-236-2338 (from outside Bermuda)
- 1-519-251-5186 (from Bermuda: collect calls)
- 1-519-251-5185 (from outside Bermuda: collect calls)

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