**Vaping 'helps almost 20,000 people stop smoking', experts estimate**

* [Ian Johnston](http://www.independent.co.uk/author/ian-johnston) Science Correspondent
* Tuesday 13 September 2016
* [44 comments](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/vaping-e-cigarettes-cancer-health-disease-quitting-smoking-tobacco-cancer-research-uk-a7249606.html#commentsDiv)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |

'Rather than undermining people’s efforts, using e-cigarettes improves the likelihood of someone quitting'

Thousands of people appear to have been helped to quit smoking by using e-cigarettes, according to new study hailed by campaigners as a sign that the controversial device is helping to improve people’s health.

The researchers, from University College London (UCL) and Cancer Research UK, estimated that 18,000 people in England became “long-term ex-smokers” in 2015 as a result of taking up vaping.

They said that attempts to stop smoking had stayed roughly the same, but e-cigarette use was associated with a greater chance of success.

Alison Cox, director of prevention at Cancer Research UK, said: “Giving up smoking can be really tough. It’s important to remember that getting support from stop smoking services is still the most effective way to quit.

“E-cigarettes can play a role in helping people quit and the evidence so far shows e-cigarettes are much safer than tobacco. This study shows the positive impact they've had on helping people give up the deadly addiction.

“This study reassures us of the promise these products have.”

More than 100,000 people die every year in the UK as a result of using tobacco, which is the leading preventable cause of cancer.

Some 2.8 million people are now believed to use e-cigarettes.

While they are viewed as a way to give up smoking by many, others have expressed concern that non-smokers are taking up vaping.

But one of the researchers, Professor Robert West, of UCL’s Health Behaviour Research Centre, said: "England is sometimes singled out as being too positive in its attitude to e-cigarettes.

“This data suggests that our relatively liberal regulation of e-cigarettes is probably justified.”

Other experts commenting on the research appeared to agree.

Dr Mike Knapton, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation (BHF), said: “Nearly one in five adults in the UK smoke, significantly increasing their risk of coronary heart disease.

“Stopping smoking is the single most important step you can take to improve your heart health, and we know that more and more people are turning to e-cigarettes to quit.

“What’s reassuring is this study suggests that rather than undermining people’s efforts, using e-cigarettes improves the likelihood of someone quitting.”

However he added there was a need to assess the “potential long-term effects” of vaping.

BHF is funding research to find out “whether or not [e-cigarettes] are as safe as people think”, he added.