Study finds ecigarettes helped 18,000 smokers to quit last year

OCTOBER 25, 2016

© Bloomberg

* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&text=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year&via=FT)
* [*Facebook*](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&t=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year)
* [*LinkedIn*](http://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&title=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year&source=Financial+Times)

[Print this page](javascript:window.print())

Top of Form

Save

Bottom of Form

[19](https://www.ft.com/content/ba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28#comments)

SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

by: [**Clive Cookson**](https://www.ft.com/topics/authors/Clive_Cookson), Science Editor

Study finds ecigarettes helped 18,000 smokers to quit last year

Vaping should be encouraged as public health benefit, say scientists

Read latest:

[Radiotherapy upgrade ‘changes face of cancer treatment’](https://www.ft.com/content/0b8458a0-99eb-11e6-b8c6-568a43813464)OCTOBER 25, 2016

© Bloomberg

* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&text=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year&via=FT)
* [*Facebook*](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&t=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year)
* [*LinkedIn*](http://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcontent%2Fba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28&title=Study%20finds%20ecigarettes%20helped%2018%2C000%20smokers%20to%20quit%20last%20year&source=Financial+Times)

[Print this page](javascript:window.print())

Top of Form

Save

Bottom of Form

[19](https://www.ft.com/content/ba00f43e-79ab-11e6-97ae-647294649b28#comments)

SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

by: [**Clive Cookson**](https://www.ft.com/topics/authors/Clive_Cookson), Science Editor

Powerful new evidence has found that ecigarettes can help people to stop smoking. The authors of two studies say vaping should be encouraged as a public health benefit rather than suppressed as a possible threat.

**Sample the FT’s top stories for a week**

You select the topic, we deliver the news.

Top of Form

Select topic                        

Enter email address

Invalid email

Sign up

By signing up you confirm that you have read and agree to the [terms and conditions](http://help.ft.com/help/legal-privacy/terms-conditions/), [cookie policy](http://help.ft.com/help/legal-privacy/cookies/) and [privacy policy](http://help.ft.com/help/legal-privacy/privacy/).

Bottom of Form

Scientists at the Health Research Centre, University College London, estimated that 18,000 long-term smokers in the UK gave up in 2015 by using ecigarettes. Their study appears in [The British Medical Journal](http://www.bmj.com/thebmj).

“England is sometimes singled out as being too positive in its attitude to ecigarettes,” said Robert West, professor of health psychology at UCL. “These data suggest that our relatively liberal regulation of ecigarettes is probably justified.”

Separately, the [Cochrane Review](http://www.cochrane.org/), an independent scientific network, released its analysis of all research about ecigarettes published so far — a total of 24 studies. “None detected any serious side-effects,” said Jamie Hartmann-Boyce of the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group.

The review concluded that ecigarettes help smokers give up by providing nicotine for inhalation in a vapour that is far less hazardous that cigarette smoke.

”We increasingly know or hear of people who say that electronic cigarettes helped them to stop smoking,” said Ann McNeill, professor of tobacco addiction at King’s College London. “These two new publications, using very different designs, provide objective evidence for this … In my view, smokers struggling to stop should try all possible methods including ecigarettes to help them to do so.”

Public health experts have two alternative ways of looking at ecigarettes. Negative views focus on possible side-effects and the risk that vaping could supplement rather than replace smoking and even inspire young people to take up real cigarettes.

But a more positive view is gaining support. John Britton, director of the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies at Nottingham University, wrote in a BMJ editorial: “Although still controversial, there is a growing consensus among UK health organisations that ecigarettes, by enabling smokers to consume nicotine without the lethal cocktail of toxins in tobacco smoke, could prevent a substantial proportion of otherwise inevitable premature mortality and morbidity among the 9m smokers in the UK.”

The BMJ research used two sources of information. One is the Smoking Toolkit Study, a monthly survey of cigarette and ecigarette use in England. The other is data from the National Health Service’s Stop Smoking service.

The study found that, while the most effective way to quit was through professional supervision with prescription medication, unsupervised use of ecigarettes was making an increasing contribution. An estimated 2.8m people in the UK use ecigarettes, according to the antismoking group Ash.

The UCL authors said the numbers who quit last year through ecigarettes, estimated at 18,000, might seem relatively small but “they are clinically significant because of the huge health gains from stopping smoking”. An average 40-year-old smoker can expect to gain nine years of life by quitting permanently.

[Copyright](http://help.ft.com/help/legal-privacy/copyright/copyright-policy/) The Financial Times Limited 2016. All rights reserved. You may share using our article tools. Please don't cut articles from FT.com and redistribute by email or post to the web.

Powerful new evidence has found that ecigarettes can help people to stop smoking. The authors of two studies say vaping should be encouraged as a public health benefit rather than suppressed as a possible threat.

Bottom of Form

Scientists at the Health Research Centre, University College London, estimated that 18,000 long-term smokers in the UK gave up in 2015 by using ecigarettes. Their study appears in [The British Medical Journal](http://www.bmj.com/thebmj).

“England is sometimes singled out as being too positive in its attitude to ecigarettes,” said Robert West, professor of health psychology at UCL. “These data suggest that our relatively liberal regulation of ecigarettes is probably justified.”

Separately, the [Cochrane Review](http://www.cochrane.org/), an independent scientific network, released its analysis of all research about ecigarettes published so far — a total of 24 studies. “None detected any serious side-effects,” said Jamie Hartmann-Boyce of the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group.

The review concluded that ecigarettes help smokers give up by providing nicotine for inhalation in a vapour that is far less hazardous that cigarette smoke.

”We increasingly know or hear of people who say that electronic cigarettes helped them to stop smoking,” said Ann McNeill, professor of tobacco addiction at King’s College London. “These two new publications, using very different designs, provide objective evidence for this … In my view, smokers struggling to stop should try all possible methods including ecigarettes to help them to do so.”

Public health experts have two alternative ways of looking at ecigarettes. Negative views focus on possible side-effects and the risk that vaping could supplement rather than replace smoking and even inspire young people to take up real cigarettes.

But a more positive view is gaining support. John Britton, director of the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies at Nottingham University, wrote in a BMJ editorial: “Although still controversial, there is a growing consensus among UK health organisations that ecigarettes, by enabling smokers to consume nicotine without the lethal cocktail of toxins in tobacco smoke, could prevent a substantial proportion of otherwise inevitable premature mortality and morbidity among the 9m smokers in the UK.”

The BMJ research used two sources of information. One is the Smoking Toolkit Study, a monthly survey of cigarette and ecigarette use in England. The other is data from the National Health Service’s Stop Smoking service.

The study found that, while the most effective way to quit was through professional supervision with prescription medication, unsupervised use of ecigarettes was making an increasing contribution. An estimated 2.8m people in the UK use ecigarettes, according to the antismoking group Ash.

The UCL authors said the numbers who quit last year through ecigarettes, estimated at 18,000, might seem relatively small but “they are clinically significant because of the huge health gains from stopping smoking”. An average 40-year-old smoker can expect to gain nine years of life by quitting permanently.

[Copyright](http://help.ft.com/help/legal-privacy/copyright/copyright-policy/) The Financial Times Limited 2016. All rights reserved. You may share using our article tools. Please don't cut articles from FT.com and redistribute by email or post to the web.