



e-Cigarettes

For Prelims: [e-Cigarettes](#), [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), Tobacco, Nicotine Addiction, Carcinogenic Substances.

For Mains: e-Cigarettes, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has urged governments to treat [e-cigarettes](#) **similarly to tobacco and ban all flavors**, threatening cigarette companies' bets on smoking alternatives.

- Some researchers, campaigners and governments see e-cigarettes, or vapes, as a key tool in reducing the **death and disease caused by smoking**. But the WHO said "urgent measures" are needed to control them.

What are e-Cigarettes?

- [e-Cigarettes](#) are **battery powered devices** that work by heating a liquid into an aerosol that the user inhales and exhales.
- The e-cigarette liquid **typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin**, flavorings, and other chemicals.
- There are many different types of e-cigarettes in use, also known as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and sometimes electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS).

What are the Concerns Raised by WHO Regarding e-Cigarettes?

- Ineffectiveness for Smoking Cessation:**
 - E-cigarettes as consumer products **are not shown to be effective for quitting tobacco** use at the population level. Instead, alarming evidence has emerged on adverse population health effects.
 - E-cigarettes have been **allowed on the open market** and aggressively marketed to young people.
 - Thirty-four countries ban the sale of e-cigarettes, 88 countries have no minimum age at which e-cigarettes can be bought and 74 countries have no regulations in place for these harmful products.
- Impact on Youth:**
 - The recruitment and **potential trapping of children and young people** at an early age into using e-cigarettes, potentially leading to **nicotine addiction**.
 - The aggressive marketing of e-cigarettes, **along with insufficient regulations in many countries**, contributes to this issue.

▪ **Rising Usage among Youth:**

- Children **13-15-years old are using e-cigarettes** at rates higher than adults in all WHO regions.
- In Canada, the rate of e-cigarette use among 16-19-year-olds has doubled between 2017-2022, and in England (the United Kingdom) the number of young users has tripled in the past three years.

▪ **Health Risks:**

- Although the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are not fully understood, these devices generate toxic substances, some of which are known to cause cancer and increase the risk of heart and lung disorders.
- E-cigarette use can also **affect brain development, cause learning disorders** in young people, and adversely affect fetal development in pregnant women.

▪ **Nicotine Addiction and Addictive Nature:**

- E-cigarettes containing nicotine are noted to be highly addictive, posing health risks to both users and bystanders. The addictive nature of nicotine in e-cigarettes raises concerns about countering nicotine addiction, especially among young users.

Note

In India, the possession of e-cigarettes and similar devices is a violation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA) 2019.

What are the Arguments in Favour of e-Cigarettes?

▪ **Harm Reduction:**

- Proponents argue that e-cigarettes offer a harm reduction strategy compared to traditional tobacco products.
- They contain nicotine but **lack many of the harmful carcinogens present in conventional cigarettes**. As a result, they are often seen as a safer alternative for adult smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit using nicotine altogether.

▪ **Economic Revenue:**

- There's an economic argument suggesting that legalizing and regulating e-cigarettes could generate substantial tax revenue for governments. By taxing e-cigarettes, authorities could benefit from revenues while also controlling and monitoring their use.

▪ **Consumer Choice:**

- Supporters argue for the importance of consumer choice and access to alternatives. They believe that adult smokers should have the option **to choose less harmful nicotine delivery systems** if they find traditional smoking cessation methods ineffective.

What is Nicotine?

- **Nicotine** is a plant alkaloid that contains nitrogen, which is found in several types of plants, including the tobacco plant and can also be produced synthetically.
- Nicotine is **both a sedative and a stimulant**.
- Nicotine is used as a direct substance in e-cigarettes and the content ranges up to 36 mg/mL. Although regular cigarettes too have nicotine, but it ranges between 1.2 to 1.4 mg/mL.
- Karnataka has notified nicotine as Class A poison.

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Tobacco Consumption?

▪ **National Tobacco Control Programme**

- Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Amendment Rules, 2023.

▪ **National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS)**

- The Union Finance Minister of India announced a 16% increase in National Calamity Contingent

Duty (NCCD) on cigarettes in the [Budget 2023-24](#).

- The Union Health Ministry of India has announced new regulations requiring [Over-The-Top \(OTT\) platforms](#) to display tobacco-related health warnings during streamed content.

Way Forward

- There is a need for **urgent measures to prevent the uptake of e-cigarettes**, counter nicotine addiction, and promote a comprehensive approach to tobacco control, considering national circumstances.
- Advocates suggest regulating and taxing e-cigarettes similarly to other "sin goods" like cigarettes and alcohol. This approach aims to disincentivize excessive use while allowing access to a potentially less harmful alternative for smokers.

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