E-liquids for use in e-cigarettes

Summary

- The liquid used in e-cigarettes is known as e-liquid.
- E-liquid products may or may not contain nicotine or other harmful substances.
- E-liquid products are not always labelled accurately and there is no guarantee that a product does not contain nicotine.
- Nicotine is a poison. If swallowed it can cause serious illness and, in some cases, death.
- Children and pets are at high risk of harm due to poisoning caused by swallowing e-liquid.
- Electronic cigarette components and e-liquid capsules are also a choking hazard for young children.
- To be safe, it is preferable not to use e-cigarettes or e-liquids in front of children, and for these products to be locked away out of sight when not in use.

What are e-liquids?

Electronic cigarettes – or e-cigarettes – simulate the act of smoking, but they don’t burn tobacco. Instead, the e-cigarette is a battery-powered device that works by heating liquid into a vapour, which is then inhaled into the lungs. Using an e-cigarette is sometimes called ‘vaping’.

Liquid for use inside an e-cigarette is called e-liquid but is also known as e-juice or vape juice.

E-liquids may contain nicotine, as well as propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine or glycerol, other chemicals (including those used to create flavours) and, in some cases, water.

E-liquid products may not be labelled properly or accurately, or packaged safely.

There is no guarantee that an e-liquid labelled ‘non-nicotine’ does not contain nicotine. It may also not be possible to know what other chemicals are contained in the e-liquid.

What are the dangers of e-liquids?

The full health impacts of inhaling vapor from e-liquids used in e-cigarettes are not yet known.

Potential dangers of e-cigarettes include:

- ingestion (swallowing) of e-liquid – which can lead to poisoning and even death when swallowed by children
- harm from inhaling e-liquid chemicals as vapour – the health effects of inhaling the various chemicals used in e-cigarette liquids may not be known. For example, flavouring may be safe for use in food, but not when they are inhaled
- inhalation of particulate matter produced by e-cigarettes – Particulate matter emitted by e-cigarettes could be dangerous to those who inhale it, just as passive smoking is harmful to those who share a contained space with regular smokers. Inhaling particulate matter can lead to asthma attacks and heart disease
- inaccurate labelling – e-liquids may not be labelled properly or packaged safely. E-liquids labelled as ‘nicotine-free’ may contain nicotine
- unsafe packaging – e-liquids may not be packaged safely. E-liquids stored in plastic or glass bottles or containers can be easily opened by children. E-liquids may also spill or leak from their bottle or container.

E-liquid safety around children

If you use an e-cigarette:

- keep it where children cannot see it or reach it

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• when you are not using it, lock it away
• do not use or discard your e-cigarette in front of children.

What to do if e-liquid is swallowed
If you are worried a child has swallowed liquid from an e-cigarette, ring the Victorian Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately.

If they are very unwell, have collapsed, stopped breathing, are fitting or having an anaphylactic reaction, ring triple zero (000) for an ambulance.

E-liquids and the law
Adults in Victoria can legally buy and use e-liquids that do not contain nicotine.

In Victoria – as in the other state and territories of Australia – it is generally illegal to sell, possess or use e-liquids containing nicotine.

The exception is where liquid nicotine has been prescribed by a medical practitioner who has established a therapeutic need for a particular patient. In these cases, the liquid nicotine can then be supplied by a compounding pharmacy, or a limited supply can be imported through the Therapeutic Goods Administration personal importation scheme.

Under the Victorian Tobacco Act 1987, it is illegal to sell or supply an e-cigarette or an e-liquid for use in an e-cigarette to a person under 18 years of age.

Where to get help
• In an emergency, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance
• Victorian Poisons Information Centre on Tel. 13 11 26
• Quitline Tel. 13 7848, Monday to Friday, 8 am–8 pm
• Quit

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