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### ARTICLE *from the* **Encyclopædia Britannica**



**e-cigarette**, in full electronic cigarette, battery-operated device modeled after regular cigarettes. The e-cigarette was invented in 2003 by Chinese pharmacist Hon Lik, who initially developed the device to serve as an alternative to conventional smoking. In addition to the battery component, an e-cigarette comprises an atomizer and a cartridge containing either a nicotine or a non-nicotine liquid solution. When the device is operated, the battery heats the liquid in the cartridge, and the atomizer vaporizes the liquid, emitting it as a mist that users inhale.

An e-cigarette's appearance is determined by the shape and size of its components. In some instances, because of its appearance and the vapours it emits, an e-cigarette may be confused with a regular cigarette. Other types of e-cigarettes, however, are similar to a cigar, a smoking pipe, or a ballpoint pen in appearance. E-cigarettes may be designed to be reusable or disposable.



While many people use e-cigarettes as substitutes for other forms of smoking, some use them as a tool to assist in smoking cessation. The safety of e-cigarettes, however, is a major area of concern, since the devices have been subjected to only very limited safety testing, and there is little evidence to suggest that they are safer than regular tobacco products. In addition, scientific evidence indicating that e-cigarettes are effective as smoking-cessation tools is lacking, even though the devices are often marketed as such.

E-cigarettes also are controversial because of various regulatory issues. For example, in 2008 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that e-cigarettes were unapproved drug-delivery devices, and the following year, invoking its authority to regulate drugs and drug-delivery devices under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA, FDCA, or FD&C), the organization initiated action against the import of e-cigarettes. In January 2010, following a lawsuit by an e-cigarette distributor, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled that e-cigarettes did not meet the criteria for drug-delivery devices and therefore were exempt from regulation under the FFDCA. The court did rule, however, that the FDA could regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (TCA), since the nicotine contained in some of the e-cigarette cartridges was derived from tobacco.

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