

Vaping etiquette: the best way to ensure smoke without ire

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The surging popularity of electronic cigarettes has prompted calls for regulation, bans, or prescriptions on the NHS. Now a group of users say that the controversial devices need something more important: an etiquette guide.

With about two million people using e-cigarettes, confusion over the rules on “vaping” in restaurants, offices and on public transport is rife, with some prohibiting it and others unclear.

The New Nicotine Alliance, a users’ group set up to help fight “kneejerk” bans, aims to develop guidance for users on how to vape considerately. Gerry Stimson, a board member, wants this to become a “five-point guide to vaping etiquette”.

Lorien Jollye, a fellow board member, said: “It’s happened so quickly that, whereas with smoking over a period of time there has become an unspoken etiquette, vaping hasn’t had that opportunity. If you’re going to request that vaping isn’t banned in public places, then vapers themselves need to be considerate. It’s only polite.”

What such a code might include, however, is hotly debated among vapers. Many agree that emitting huge clouds of vapour — known as “cloud-chasing” — is impolite in public places. “Most people accept that isn’t something you do in public or over dinner. We can’t expect to sit in a public place and do something that was very intrusive for other people. But normal use isn’t intrusive,” Ms Jollye said.

After that the consensus quickly breaks down. “One [rule] might be, don’t use a highly flavoured mixture in places where people might get upset,” Professor Stimson said. “It’s like you don’t want people going wearing massive amounts of aftershave or perfume.”

Ms Jollye disagreed, insisting that strong flavours, which range from banana custard to latte, are an integral part of the experience. “I hate the smell of egg sandwiches, but I can’t expect people to emit no smell when they’re eating,” she reasoned.

She also insisted that there was no reason for vapers to hide their devices in public, arguing that visible vaping could encourage smokers to switch. Other vapers argue that one should avoid vaping in supermarkets, or find a dedicated room at the office.

Some experts believe that e-cigarettes could save lives if smokers switch, because they contain only nicotine, not cancer-causing tobacco. Other public health experts have called for a crackdown on vaping for fear that it will make smoking appear normal again.

Professor Stimson argues that this is “disingenuous” because new generations of e-cigarettes look increasingly different from the early “cig-a-like” devices designed to mimic tobacco smoking. “These products can no longer be confused with cigarettes,” he said.

Lookalikes to rocket launchers: how devices have evolved

As more smokers kick the habit with the help of e-cigarettes, the vaping industry has kept up by producing more devices (*Chris Smyth writes*).

The “first generation” are cigarette lookalikes. Most recent quitters use them, buying the product for about £10. In 2014, 60 per cent of vapers were still using this type. However, they are mostly disposable, prompting frequent users to move on to “second generation” e-cigarettes.

These are often longer, shaped like a pen, and have cartridges of e-liquid that can be replaced. Flavours come in all varieties, from mango to smoked salmon, although most can only be bought online. Cartridge refills cost £1 to £2, e-liquid refills are £4 per 10ml.

The “third generation” of e-cigarettes, or “mods” as they are known because different parts are sold separately, are new and are more like rocket launchers than anything found in a packet of Marlboro. These are for the real enthusiasts who will invest up to £160 for some devices.

About 40 per cent of vapers used second and third generation e-cigarettes last year, but it is predicted by ECigIntelligence, a consulting firm, that this year at least 60 per cent of users will opt for the more hi-tech versions.