

'The best option is always to quit smoking'

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Ziyad Ben Taleb, assistant professor of public health. Credit: University of Texas at Arlington

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced plans to require tobacco companies to cut the amount of nicotine in traditional cigarettes. It also announced a ban of Juul e-cigarettes in the U.S., saying the company has provided insufficient data about the potential risks of using its products.

The changing landscape of tobacco and nicotine is one of the driving forces behind the work of The University of Texas at Arlington's

Nicotine and Tobacco Research Laboratory (NTRL), directed by Ziyad Ben Taleb, assistant professor of public [health](#). Ben Taleb shared his thoughts on the major developments.

What impact do you believe the FDA's planned requirement to decrease nicotine levels in cigarettes will have?

This was a long-anticipated move by the FDA. We know that smokers consume cigarettes because of nicotine—a notoriously addictive substance—and have a higher chance of illness and death because of all the chemicals contained in cigarettes. Lowering the amount of nicotine will make it easier for smokers to break free from the grip of addiction and to achieve sustained abstinence. This proposal is expected to save lives and protect public health.

Is there an amount of nicotine that you would consider safe to use?

It depends on the mode of delivery. In general, nicotine delivery methods that involve combustion and/or inhalation through the lungs carry higher risks than others. No tobacco product is completely safe to use, regardless of the mode of delivery. Switching from one product to another is like replacing a flat tire with another flat tire. The best option is always to quit smoking. However, as a cessation aid, [nicotine replacement therapy](#) (such as [nicotine](#) patches, gums, sprays, etc.) can provide some help to smokers who otherwise find it difficult to quit.

What does the scientific community have to say about the impact of e-cigarettes on health?

There is an accumulating body of research suggesting a detrimental impact of vaping on health, including research studies conducted by our team at the NTRL. Our findings, which have focused on Juul, show that, like smoking cigarettes, vaping Juul leads to short-term impairment of

cardiovascular function, which has the potential to cause [heart disease](#) among habitual users in the long term.

In your view, what are the next steps after the Juul decision?

While the FDA's decision to ban the Juul device is a great step toward curbing the vaping epidemic among adolescents, it is important to highlight that other products may still be available. The use of e-cigarettes in general, regardless of brand, has a potential detrimental effect on health. Therefore, it's necessary to continue monitoring and evaluating the effects of various electronic vaping devices that are available in the market in order to prevent disease and protect public health.

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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