
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Cigarettes v e-cigarettes



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn.

Finn

Hello.

Rob

Today we are going to talk about electronic cigarettes – also called e-cigarettes – and teach you words that will help you to discuss the subject or understand news about it. Let's start by asking you Finn, do you smoke?

Finn

No, I don't Rob. Although sometimes the smoke from other people's cigarettes makes me **cough** (coughs a bit) – like that.

Rob

Yes, it's because you are a **secondary smoker** – in other words, you're someone who doesn't smoke but breathes in the smoke from someone else's cigarette. And this smoke is very harmful to your health. So, here is today's question, Finn.

Finn

Go ahead.

Rob

According to the World Health Organisation, there are more than 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke. How many of these are known to be harmful to our health? Is it at least:

- a) 50
- b) 150
- c) 250

Finn

Rob, you know, I honestly have no idea. Let's say c) 250.

Rob

Always the pessimist! Well, you'll get the answer at the end of the programme. Some estimates say there are more than a million people using e-cigarettes just in the UK. But these devices might not be very safe for secondary smokers ...

Finn

Really? I thought they were OK because they produce vapour – that's water in the form of gas – rather than the smoke full of harmful chemicals that you get in ordinary cigarettes.

Rob

Well, the World Health Organisation is not convinced e-cigarettes are any safer to secondary smokers. It has recommended a **ban** on the use of electronic cigarettes indoors and their sale to people under 18 years old.

Finn

A ban? In other words, they don't want them to be permitted indoors anymore? Well, I know that e-cigarettes work by heating liquid **nicotine** – nicotine is the substance in tobacco which makes it addictive. And it turns this into vapour which is then breathed in by the smoker. I thought because it was just vapour, and therefore OK for non-smokers too.

Rob

Well, you see, it's vapour with some chemicals in it. And experts fear it could have similar effects to the smoke produced by ordinary cigarettes. Listen to what Professor John Ashton has to say. He's from the Faculty of Public Health here in the UK. Which words does he use to describe the use of e-cigarettes for an extended period of time?

INSERT

Professor John Ashton, from the Faculty of Public Health in the UK:

*There are scientists in America who've been studying second-hand effects of tobacco smoke who are raising these issues now about the e-cigarettes. And we really can't allow these things to get established before we know what the **long-term** effects are going to be.*

Finn

He talks about long-term effects. And he means that the constant use of e-cigarettes for an extended period of time might cause harm which we are not aware of yet.

Rob

You can't light up a cigarette in a pub or bar anymore. It was the effect of people's cigarette smoke on others that led to the ban on ordinary cigarettes in Britain. Private companies and the authorities are keen not to risk bringing back any kind of smoking to closed spaces in public places.

Finn

This is likely to annoy many smokers who have been moving to electronic cigarettes in an attempt to cut down on nicotine or even to **quit smoking**.

Rob

Yes, many people want to quit smoking – stop smoking – at once. And they find it easier to do this if they can use e-cigarettes. In the last few decades smokers have been feeling persecuted.

Finn

Well, there's a lot of pressure for them to quit the habit.

Rob

Listen to this smoker who uses e-cigarettes. He's in a pub in Bristol. Which word does he use to talk about the harm certain things do to children?

INSERT

Bristol pub, male customer:

*We react to absolutely everything in this world. What we'll gonna have eventually though is 'no drinking beer' in pubs because it's **damaging** for children to watch it happening.*

Finn

He uses the word 'damaging', meaning harmful. He complains that there's an **overreaction** to things like cigarettes and alcohol.

Rob

Yes. An 'overreaction' means responding to something in a way which is more forceful than required. He complained that one day the authorities might end up banning people from drinking alcohol in pubs. Pubs, as we know, are bars to which most customers go to drink alcohol.

Finn

And I think he's using some irony here, maybe. Making a joke there I think.

Rob

Well, the right to smoke or not smoke generates passionate debates. But here are some facts, which might make people, who are about to light up a cigarette, think again.

Finn

Maybe.

Rob

I told you earlier in the programme that there are more than 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke. And I asked you how many of these are known to be harmful to health. The options were: at least 50, 150 or 250?

Finn

I said 250 – is it as many as that Rob?

Rob

It is as many as that. Yes, at least 250, according to the World Health Organisation website. It says that more than 50 chemicals in tobacco smoke are known to cause cancer. Any amount of second hand tobacco smoke is thought to be unsafe and second hand smoke causes more than 600,000 early deaths per year. Well, as we're nearly at the end of the programme let's just remember some of the words we used today, Finn.

Finn

OK. We heard:

cough

secondary smoker

ban

nicotine

long-term

quit smoking

damaging

overreaction

Rob

Thanks Finn. Well that's it for this programme. Please join us soon again for 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

cough

sudden expulsion of air from the lungs, usually due to an irritation

secondary smoker

non-smoker who breathes in other people's cigarette smoke

ban

prohibition, no longer being allowed

nicotine

chemical in tobacco believed to cause addiction

long-term

for a long time in the future

quit smoking

give up smoking

damaging

harmful

overreaction

response to something which is more forceful than required