

Helping pregnant smokers quit: a multi-centre randomised controlled trial of electronic cigarettes versus nicotine replacement therapy

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Like many other smokers in the UK, some pregnant smokers try to limit or stop smoking with the help of e-cigarettes. It is not known whether this helps with stopping smoking and whether using e-cigarettes has any bad effects on the baby.

We recruited 1140 pregnant smokers who wanted to quit. A random half were given nicotine patches, which are commonly used to help smokers quit. The other half were given an e-cigarette. They also received six weekly phone calls to support them in stopping smoking. We then looked at how many in each group stopped smoking by the end of pregnancy.

More women stopped smoking in the group that was given an e-cigarette, but the difference was small and could be due to chance. However, some of the women in the nicotine patch group who had successfully stopped smoking were using e-cigarettes rather than patches. When these (and women in the e-cigarette group who used patches) were not counted, e-cigarettes helped almost twice as many women stop smoking than patches.

E-cigarettes were better than patches in preventing low birthweight (having babies who weigh less than 2.5 kg). Otherwise, women given patches and those given e-cigarettes (and their babies) had similar numbers of medical complications.

For pregnant women who smoke and need help to quit, e-cigarettes are probably more helpful than nicotine patches, and do not pose any additional risks to women or their babies.

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