

# Perceived health and capacity to cope with stress in recent ex-smokers: Impact of vaping versus quitting all nicotine

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Little is known about the continued use of nicotine following smoking cessation on perceived well-being in comparison to complete cessation of nicotine use.

**Aims and Methods:** To explore aspects of perceived well-being and coping among recent ex-smokers as a function of vaping status. Ever-daily smokers in the International Tobacco Control 4 country smoking and vaping surveys in 2016 (w1 N = 883) and 2018 (w2 N = 1088). Cross-sectional associations and longitudinal samples for those who quit between waves and those who quit at w1 and maintained abstinence to w2. Main outcome measures were: Past 30 days of depression symptoms, perceived stress, stress management since quitting, and change in perceived day-to-day health.

**Results:** In the cross-sectional analyses vapers were more likely to report both improved stress management (aOR = 1.71, 95% CI 1.23–2.36) and perceived day-to-day health (aOR = 1.65, 95% CI 1.26–2.16) than nicotine abstainers. In the longitudinal analyses, smokers who switched to vaping between waves (n = 372) were more likely to report depression symptoms at w2 (aOR = 2.00, 95% CI 1.09–3.65) but reported improved perceived health (aOR = 1.92, 95% CI 1.16–3.20). For the past daily smokers who remained quit between waves (n = 382), vapers were more likely to report improved stress management relative to abstainers (RRR = 5.05, 95% CI 1.19–21.40). There were no other significant differences between vapers and nicotine abstainers.

**Conclusions:** There is little evidence to support the view that perceptions of well-being deteriorate in vapers compared to complete nicotine abstainers in the immediate years after smoking cessation.

**Implications:** This study could find no conclusive evidence that the continued use of nicotine via e-cigarettes was detrimental to health compared to completely stopping nicotine intake altogether. Our results would suggest that continuing to use nicotine may even result in some benefits in the short term such as improved stress management, however further longitudinal studies are required to examine if these effects are restricted to the early post-quitting phase and whether other positive or negative effects on psychosocial health emerge in the future.

## Recommended Citation

Le Grande, M.R., Balmford, J., Borland, R., McNeill, A. (2023). Perceived health and capacity to cope with stress in recent ex-smokers: Impact of vaping versus quitting all nicotine. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 25(3), 553-562. doi: 10.1093/ntr/ntac252.

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