

MEDIA RELEASE

Release date: Friday, 15 April 2016

Latest issue: E-cigarettes may pose passive smoking risk; action needed on continuing asbestos exposure

E-cigarette vapour can contain harmful chemicals with known adverse health effects and may pose a passive smoking risk, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women, according to a study published today in the journal *Public Health Research & Practice*.

Researchers from Health Protection NSW reviewed the current evidence on passive exposure to e-cigarettes and found the majority of studies concluded e-cigarettes could pose a risk to bystanders.

"The risk from passive exposure to e-cigarettes is likely to be less than conventional cigarettes but bystanders can be exposed to numerous pollutants above background levels and in concentrations that can be harmful to health," said lead author, Senior Policy Analyst Dr Isabel Hess.

"E-cigarette vapour can contain elevated levels of nicotine, fine particulate matter, glycerine, propylene glycol, formaldehyde and metals."

The researchers said nicotine has been shown to have detrimental effects during vulnerable periods of brain and lung development, such as during pregnancy, childhood and adolescence. Fine particulate matter, even at very low concentrations, can lead to heart and lung disease and has been associated with an increased risk of death from all causes. And long-term exposure to other chemicals such as formaldehyde has been shown to cause nasopharyngeal cancers.

"There is an urgent need for more research to determine the true extent of the risk from passive exposure to e-cigarettes," Dr Hess said.

"Based on the evidence available to date we can say that passive exposure to e-cigarettes has the potential to impact on people's health."

- [READ THE PAPER](#)

Action needed on continuing asbestos exposure

Changes to the way we collect information about people's exposure to asbestos are needed if Australia is going to minimise the impact of the predicted 'third wave' of asbestos exposure, particularly affecting people who work or have worked in repairing, renovating or demolishing asbestos containing buildings.

In a perspectives paper published in today's issue of *Public Health Research & Practice*, Professors Bruce Armstrong and Tim Driscoll from the University of Sydney argue that while there is currently limited scientific evidence for the predicted impact of this third wave, it is likely that it will contribute to future asbestos-related disease.

"We need to fill the information gaps on how people have been and might be exposed to asbestos with a lot more detail so we can crest this wave with minimum harm and cost to the community," they said.

"For example the Australian Mesothelioma Registry is notified of mesothelioma cases but information on how newly-diagnosed patients might have been exposed to asbestos is only available for a small proportion of them. This information is difficult to get, but it could be achieved if patients, medical and nursing staff, mesothelioma support groups and legal representatives were more actively engaged."

Increasing the funding for the research work planned by the Australian Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency would also help supply the information needed to drive evidence based policy in this area, Professors Armstrong and Driscoll said.

- [READ THE PAPER](#)

Other papers in this issue of *Public Health Research & Practice*

Vaccination status of children in child care: the impact of legislation change

Amending public health legislation in NSW by requiring child care centres to collect vaccination information or proof of exemption from parents was successful in prompting parents who had forgotten to vaccinate but failed to affect conscientious objectors.

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TPP tobacco carve-out a risk for Australian tobacco control

A legal safeguard in the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement preventing tobacco companies from suing Australia over its anti-tobacco policies provides no guarantee companies won't exploit other loopholes in the agreement and this poses a potential risk to public health in Australia.

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Widespread smoking of nicotine patches an unintended consequence of NT smoke-free prisons policy

Misuse of nicotine replacement therapy patches was a widespread problem associated with Australia's smoke-free prisons policy in the Northern Territory. But long lead-times and a comprehensive awareness campaign helped generate support for the ban and smoothed the transition for staff and prisoners.

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Close the Gap: perceptions of drinking water in rural Aboriginal communities

A new perspective is needed from public health authorities and drinking water providers to reduce public health risk due to drinking water of unknown quality and to help to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' morbidity and mortality rates.

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Communicating about nanomaterials: how do Australians perceive the risk?

Manufactured nanomaterials are regulated as chemicals but describing them as such in public communication may increase public angst because Australians generally perceive chemicals as riskier than nanomaterials.

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Regulation helps keep drinking water safe in regional NSW

Water quality in NSW is benefiting from the implementation of NSW Health's quality assurance guidelines for public and private water suppliers and Aboriginal communities.

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Strengthening the NSW influenza surveillance system

The NSW influenza surveillance system was found to deliver timely and good-quality information, but could be improved by being more flexible and stable, automating systems and formalising data collection

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