

# Nicotine: The Unknown Poison

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What makes tobacco products addictive? Nicotine is a naturally occurring chemical in the tobacco plant. But aside from being addictive, nicotine is often falsely portrayed as harmless, especially by e-cigarette manufacturers. So, what's the big deal about nicotine? Nicotine itself is a dangerous neurotoxin, even if it weren't addictive. To start, nicotine is poisonous if ingested and is one of the most toxic of all poisons.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, even handling the plant leaves can cause health problems such as headache, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue.<sup>2</sup> In the past, nicotine was used as an insecticide, until it was commercially banned in 2014 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) because of its potential to contaminate agricultural products.<sup>3</sup> It shouldn't be a surprise that it's harmful to humans, too.

As a highly toxic chemical, the EPA lists nicotine liquid as "acute hazardous waste." What classifies nicotine as hazardous waste? When it is the sole active ingredient in a chemical product such as e-liquids/e-juices for e-cigarettes, cartridges and vials, then it must be disposed of according to guidelines set by the EPA.<sup>4</sup>

Poisoning from liquid nicotine can occur by ingestion, inhalation, or absorption of the product through the skin or eyes.<sup>5</sup> As used in tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, nicotine is harmful.

It may contribute to the hardening of arteries, which could lead to a heart attack or stroke.<sup>5</sup> Or you can just be "nic sick," slang for nicotine poisoning, which can give you fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headaches, increased blood pressure and heart rate.<sup>6</sup>

But nicotine doesn't just harm the body. For young people in particular, it is brain poison and can have devastating effects on the developing brains of adolescents and young people.

Research shows that as a neurotoxin, nicotine can interfere with emotion and impulse control of adolescents.<sup>7</sup> It may even contribute to developing anxiety disorders<sup>8</sup> – not something anybody needs!

Don't be fooled by the tobacco industry claim that everything bad about traditional cigarettes aren't in e-cigarettes! They left the nicotine in. To learn more about the dangers of nicotine, visit <https://www.flavorshookkids.org/>