

SWITCHING FROM SMOKING TO VAPORIZING

Smoking is a method of extracting a desired component from organic material through combustion. Unfortunately, combustion also produces undesirable by-products that can cause irritation and even illness. Smoke smells and tastes bad, and combustion destroys some of the components that you are after. Vaporizing avoids these drawbacks because it is a much gentler process and does not heat the material to the point of destruction.

The problem is that smokers who try vaporization are sometimes disappointed. They feel that the effect isn't the same, or that the vapor isn't thick so it can't be potent, or that they simply aren't feeling any effect at all. Frustrated, they give up on vapor, unaware that a little preparation could have resulted in a much different and rewarding experience.

One of the attractions of vaporization is avoiding toxic combustion byproducts, but the lack of these components sometimes leads to some confusion. That's because the missing compounds were having an effect on you, just not in a good way.

The asphyxiants in smoke, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, reduce oxygen in your system. This can lead to symptoms of mild hypoxia, such as dizziness, sluggishness, and even euphoria. In addition, organic matter burns so violently and at such higher temperatures that there is more particulate matter (tar) in the airstream. This can trigger an immune system response that you can feel. When you switch to the gentler and lower temperatures of vaporization, you avoid these effects, but now the experience has changed in a way that perhaps you didn't expect. Their absence is probably why those who vaporize often describe the effects as "cleaner", but some people miss them.

There is nothing that vaporization can offer to replace these effects. The fact is that they are symptoms of something that is bad for you, so you are better off without them. If you feel strongly that you want them, vaporization probably won't work for you.

Another issue for some converting smokers is the density of vapor. Smoke is dense, mostly because it contains a huge amount of particulates (aerosols of various sizes) that provide lots surface area and nuclei for condensation. Some people feel that vapor should replicate that experience. This is possible with the right vaporizer or technique, but usually at the expense of flavor and smoothness. Some vaporizers are designed specifically to deliver thick vapor by using a higher vapor to air ratio or higher temperatures, or both. This won't make the vapor any more potent overall, but it does result in faster delivery at the expense of flavor and accelerated consumption.

High temperature vaporizing also resembles smoking more closely in that more (or all) of the active components are released simultaneously. Low temperature vaporization often targets a single component or a higher ratio of various components released at lower temperatures. This prefers some effects over others, which could be diminished or absent. A converting smoker who is expecting a combined effect can mistakenly feel that there is no effect at all. Some people report that vapor is slower to effect them than smoke, which again contributes to confusion.

So what is a converting smoker to do?

- Make sure you get the right vaporizer and that you know how to use it.
- Learn what effects will be missing and adjust to doing without them.
- Educate yourself about the effects of your vapor at the temperature or range that you'll use.
- Consider a variable temperature vaporizer and start at the higher end of the range.
- Be patient with vapor. Allow time for it to work before judging its effects.
- Stop smoking completely while you try to convert. Give it at least two weeks.