



SMOKING, VAPING & COVID-19: WHAT ARE HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS AND EXPERTS SAYING?

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

“Being a current or former cigarette smoker increases your risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Actions to take

- If you currently smoke, quit. If you used to smoke, don't start again. If you've never smoked, don't start.
- [Counseling from a healthcare provider and Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)-approved medications](#) can double the chances of quitting smoking.
- For help quitting smoking, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit smokefree.gov.” ([“Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) – People with Certain Medical Conditions,” CDC, Oct. 6, 2020](#))

“[CDC updates] the list of underlying medical conditions that put adults of any age at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19... The level of evidence for each condition was determined by CDC reviewers based on available information about COVID-19. ... in this most recent update in October 2020, smoking was moved from ‘mixed evidence’ to ‘strong evidence.’” ([“Scientific Evidence for Conditions that Increase Risk of Severe Illness,” CDC, Oct. 6, 2020](#))

“We also know that tobacco smoking can increase the risk for developing lung disease, making it harder to recover from lung diseases or infections such as COVID-19. And so we do encourage you to have your patients quit smoking or think about that, and they can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/quit> for help or more information about that.” ([Dr. Georgina Peacock, “COVID-19 Response At Risk Task Force Lead, CDC, Underlying Medical Conditions and People at Higher Risk for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\),” CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity \(COCA\) Call, Mar. 27, 2020](#))

Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse

“Because it attacks the lungs, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape. ...

Thus far, deaths and serious illness from COVID-19 seem concentrated to those who are older and who have underlying health issues, such as diabetes, cancer, and respiratory conditions. It is therefore reasonable to be concerned that compromised lung function or lung disease related to smoking history, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), could put people at risk for serious complications of COVID-19. ...

Vaping, like smoking, may also harm lung health. Whether it can lead to COPD is still unknown, but emerging evidence suggests that exposure to aerosols from e-cigarettes harms the cells of the lung and diminishes the ability to respond to infection.” ([COVID-19: Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders – NIDA, Mar. 24, 2020](#))

“Much is still unknown, but it can be expected that persons who smoke, vape, or use certain drugs will be at increased risk for infection and its more severe consequences...” ([Dr. Nora Volkow, “Collision of the COVID-19 and Addiction Epidemics,” Annals of Internal Medicine, Apr. 2, 2020](#))

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

“Cigarette smoking causes heart and lung diseases, suppresses the immune system, and increases the risk of respiratory infections. ... People who smoke cigarettes may be at increased risk from Covid-19, and may have worse outcomes from Covid-19.” ([“FDA Shifts Its Covid-19 Stance on Vaping, Smoking Impact,” Bloomberg Government, Apr. 15, 2020](#))

World Health Organization

“Tobacco smoking is a known risk factor for many respiratory infections and increases the severity of respiratory diseases. A review of studies by public health experts convened by WHO on 29 April 2020 found that smokers are more likely to develop severe disease with COVID-19, compared to non-smokers. ...

COVID-19 is an infectious disease that primarily attacks the lungs. Smoking impairs lung function making it harder for the body to fight off coronaviruses and other diseases. Tobacco is also a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory disease and diabetes which put people with these conditions at higher risk for developing severe illness when affected by COVID-19. Available research suggests that smokers are at higher risk of developing severe disease and death.” ([“WHO statement: Tobacco use and COVID-19,” World Health Organization, May 11, 2020](#))

“Smoking damages your lungs and other parts of your body, and it makes you more vulnerable to [#COVID19](#) infection. It is the right time to quit smoking for a safer and better health.” ([@WHO, Twitter, Apr. 22, 2020](#))

Dr. Jerome Adams, U.S. Surgeon General

“Right now, in this moment, it is your day to quit smoking. [@CNN](#) shares how your lungs can make noticeable improvements in the days/weeks after quitting, giving you the edge to fight [#coronavirus](#) if you do become ill. [#COVID19](#)” ([@Surgeon General, Twitter, Apr. 4, 2020](#))

“Give your lungs the best chance at fighting not only [#COVID19](#), but all respiratory diseases. Quit smoking today by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW. As my [#CessationSGR](#) details, you’ll experience immediate benefits.” ([@Surgeon General, Twitter, Apr. 4, 2020](#))

“Well, so far the demography definitely seems to be very different in the United States versus in other countries that saw this hit earlier, and we’re looking into that. There are theories that it could be because we know we have a higher proportion of people in the United States and also in Italy who vape. We don’t know if that’s the only cause, but it’s important for young people to know you can get this disease, you can be hospitalized from this disease, you can die from this disease, but most importantly, you can spread it to your loved ones, and so we need you to really lean in.” ([The Today Show, Mar. 23, 2020](#))

Dr. Tom Frieden, former Director of U.S. CDC, current President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives

“People with coronavirus infection and cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes are at least twice as likely to die. Smoking is especially deadly – one study found that smokers have 14 times greater odds of developing COVID-associated pneumonia than non-smokers. ...

Governments can protect heart health by raising taxes on tobacco (we’re going to need the revenue, and tobacco taxes are the single most effective way to encourage smokers to quit) and making all public places smoke-free (so we can go out and breathe air that is free of both

coronavirus and cancer-causing smoke!). Currently, 4 out of 10 people in the U.S. aren't fully protected by smoke-free indoor air policies in all bars, restaurants and worksites. ...

Because people with chronic disease are the most likely to require scarce intensive care beds, and the most likely to die, it's more urgent than ever that we act, now, to help people quit smoking, be physically active, and get their blood pressure and diabetes under control. And it's not just for their own sake – all of us will be safer when each of us is healthier." (["Former CDC Chief Dr. Tom Frieden: Coronavirus and cardiovascular disease – stopping a deadly duo," Fox News, Mar. 25, 2020](#))

Albert Rizzo, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, American Lung Association

"Cigarette smoking and vaping are linked to lung inflammation and lowered immune function in the lung's airways both of which can increase likelihood of complications if exposed to COVID-19. Therefore, long-term smokers and e-cigarette users may have a higher risk of developing chronic lung conditions associated with severe cases." (["COVID-19: What Those with Lung Disease Should Know – American Lung Association, Mar. 26, 2020](#))

Dr. Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir, Pediatric Pulmonologist, Columbia University

"I have no doubt in saying that smoking and vaping could put people at increased risk of poor outcomes from Covid-19 ... It is quite clear that smoking and vaping are bad for the lungs, and the predominant symptoms of Covid are respiratory. Those two things are going to be bad in combination." (["Vaping Links to Covid Risk Are Becoming Clear," The New York Times, Sept. 4, 2020](#))

Dr. Neal Patel, Pulmonologist and Critical Care Medicine Specialist, Mayo Clinic

"Smoking makes you more susceptible to COVID-19, because it destroys some of your lung's natural defense mechanisms. Vaping may do the same thing. ... I recommend people stop vaping to maintain lung health and reduce the risk of developing severe disease if they contract COVID-19." (["What smokers should know about COVID-19 - Mayo Clinic, Mar. 24, 2020](#))

Dr. J. Taylor Hays, Director of the Nicotine Dependence Center, Mayo Clinic

"There is a long history of smokers having more severe respiratory illness in general and this is for a few well-established reasons. They clear mucus less efficiently, the cilia which get infectious particles and secretions out of the lungs, work less efficiently. Smoking also causes inflammation in the airways, which is made worse with respiratory illnesses. ...

People who quit for even a short time see an improvement in lung health quite quickly. For most smokers who don't already have serious lung injury, they will see immediate improvements in their health, and less opportunity for severe diseases including COVID-19." (["Smokers At Higher Risk Of Severe COVID-19 During Coronavirus Outbreak," Forbes, Mar. 23, 2020](#))

Cleveland Clinic

"As with cigarette smoking, vaping can also compromise the respiratory system. This means that people who smoke or vape are more susceptible to lung infections. According to Dr. Humberto Choi, a pulmonologist and smoking cessation specialist at the Cleveland Clinic], recent studies have shown that aldehydes and other components found in vaping liquids can impair the immune function of cells found in the airway and lungs." (["Teens, Vaping and Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Is There a Connection?, Mar. 20, 2020](#))

Massachusetts General Hospital

“Smoking and vaping have harmful effects on the body, including making it harder for the body to fight infections. This includes serious infections like COVID-19 (also called coronavirus). ... Quitting smoking and vaping can help protect you and your family from COVID-19.” ([“Smoking, Vaping and COVID-19: About the Connection and How to Quit,” Mar 26, 2020](#))

Dr. Stanton A. Glantz, Director of Center for Tobacco Control Research & Education, University of California San Francisco

“When someone’s lungs are exposed to flu or other infections the adverse effects of smoking or vaping are much more serious than among people who do not smoke or vape.” ([“Reduce your risk of serious lung disease caused by corona virus by quitting smoking and vaping,” Stanton A. Glantz blog, Mar. 29, 2020](#))

Dr. Susan Walley, Chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Tobacco Control

“Right now, if you need a reason to quit, look no farther than COVID-19.” ([“Teens who vape should consider quitting now. Here's how to do it,” Mashable, Mar. 23, 2020.](#))

Truth Initiative

“As we confront the coronavirus, it is more important than ever for smokers to quit and for youth and young adults to stop using all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to protect their health.” ([“COVID-19: the connection to smoking and vaping, and resources for quitting, Mar. 24, 2020](#))

Dr. Aaron Bernstein, interim Director of the Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

“Given what we know now, it is very likely that people who are exposed to more air pollution and who are smoking tobacco products are going to fare worse if infected with covid than those who are breathing cleaner air, and who don’t smoke.” ([“The coronavirus is deadly enough. But some experts suspect bad air makes it worse,” The Washington Post, Mar. 15, 2020](#))

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent

“Young people are not immune from this coronavirus. People between the ages of 20 and 44, they make up 20% of the hospitalizations and we also know that about 20% of people between the ages of 18 and 34 vape so it’s anecdotal at this point, but it does stand to reason that if someone is creating some sort of lung injury as a result of smoking or vaping, and then they get the coronavirus on top of it, it could be a problem.” ([“CNN New Day, Mar. 24, 2020](#))

Dr. Alok Patel, Pediatrician, New York-Presbyterian Hospital

“We know that e-cigarettes include chemicals such as propylene glycol, glycerol, and flavorings, and that these chemicals have the ability to go deep into your lungs and cause damage. When people become critically ill from COVID-19, this also involves the deep pockets of their lungs. It’s really scary to think about what could be happening in those that have both of these going on together.” ([“Vaping and e-cigarettes: Adding fuel to the coronavirus fire?,” ABC News, Mar. 26, 2020](#))

Dr. Joanna Cohen, Director of the Institute for Global Tobacco Control, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

“It’s so early in terms of the studies that are being done, but I think it’s certainly a possibility that vaping and inhaling foreign substances into your lungs could make you more susceptible to other lung infections. And I guess what I would suggest is that young people shouldn’t think that

they're immune to COVID-19, particularly if they're vaping." (["Does vaping make you more susceptible to coronavirus?" CBS News, Mar. 10, 2020](#))

Dr. Tara Narula, Cardiologist, Lenox Hill Hospital (New York City), CBS News Medical Contributor

"Well, if there was ever a reason to quit, here's another one. Anything that's going to compromise your lungs is going to increase your risk of being susceptible. We know that smoking decreases your ability to really fight infection." (["Who is the most at risk for coronavirus?" CBS This Morning, Mar. 10, 2020](#))

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, United Kingdom

"It is abundantly clear from the research into previous coronaviruses that smoking makes the impact of a coronavirus worse." ([Health Secretary: "It is abundantly clear that smoking makes the impact of a coronavirus worse" – ASH UK, Mar. 18, 2020](#))

Dr. Charlie Kenward, General Practitioner with NHS Bristol (UK)

"We are doing everything we can to keep people as safe and healthy as possible through this crisis. Stopping smoking also helps improve heart and lung conditions, wound healing and many other health conditions which will all carry on at the same time as COVID-19. Stopping smoking remains the single most effective thing people can do to improve their and their family's health both now and in the future." ([Health Secretary: "It is abundantly clear that smoking makes the impact of a coronavirus worse" – ASH UK, Mar. 18, 2020](#))

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, October 14, 2020