

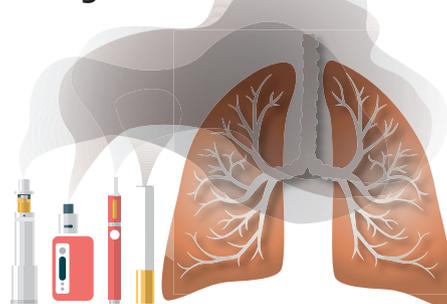
During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Lung Specialists of the World Implore You: Inhale Only Clean Air

Recent social media and lay news report that nicotine may help protect from COVID-19. However, lung specialists of the American Thoracic Society and California Thoracic Society recommend that you inhale only clean air. Research shows that exposure to smoke, vapors, and air pollution all contribute to worse outcomes in COVID-19 infection. This fact sheet summarizes some of the common public questions addressed to lung healthcare professionals.

Healthy Lungs



Smoking or Vaping → Lung Illness



Can smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes (nicotine/cannabinoids/marijuana) protect me against COVID-19?

No! Multiple research studies have now demonstrated that people who use cigarettes and e-cigarettes have worse outcomes if they get COVID-19. This is because the smoke and fumes/aerosols cause inflammation in the lungs just like COVID-19 can. More inflammation means less ability for the lungs to absorb oxygen into the body.

In addition, sharing cigarettes and devices is particularly dangerous. Infected people can contaminate cigarettes with droplets that are then inhaled by others. By sharing tobacco and cannabis products you increase the chances of infection and even worse, delivering the infection directly to your lung—where the virus causes its biggest injury. Remember that many with the virus have no symptoms but people may get seriously ill and many deaths have occurred.

How does air pollution affect COVID-19?

Air pollution substantially increases the chances of developing lung and heart disease. Research shows that areas with higher levels of air pollution have been heavily impacted by COVID-19, but the exact linkages are still being studied. COVID-19 related lockdowns with more remote workers not going into offices have reduced outdoor air pollution and may have contributed to better lung health for all.

For now, do your part by avoiding non-essential car, train, or air travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. This may prevent your chances of getting infected while traveling, decrease air pollution, and protect your lung health. Consider using an indoor HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter to improve indoor air quality if possible, as this could potentially improve ventilation and decrease SARS Co-V2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) transmission.

How can I quit tobacco/marijuana/vaping?

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to significant stress and uncertainty, so talk to your healthcare provider about how to best quit safely to protect your health. 1-800-QUIT-NOW is a free hotline to help stop smoking, and the American Thoracic Society has more resources available at <http://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/topic-specific/tobacco-use.php>

I do not vape or smoke, but my family member/friend does in the same room, how does that affect my health?

Secondhand smoke is dangerous, and the health effects of exposure are almost similar to those who directly vape or smoke. Smoking and vaping aerosols is not safe, you should only inhale clean air. Smokers should be asked to smoke outdoors and away from door entries and ventilation outlets to prevent second-hand exposure.

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R_x Action Steps

- ✓ If you are currently smoking or vaping, contact 1-800-QUIT-NOW and your healthcare provider to get help sooner rather than later as COVID-19 is more severe in people who smoke or vape.
- ✓ If you currently do not smoke or vape, do not start these dangerous habits, as research shows that it does not help prevent COVID-19, on the contrary these contribute to worsening COVID-19 disease.
- ✓ During the pandemic, avoid non-essential car, train, and air travel as much as possible: the reduction in air pollution helps everyone's lungs.
- ✓ During the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, find healthy ways to manage stress such as exercising at home and eating a healthy diet.

Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:

Resources

Guan W, et al. Clinical characteristics of coronavirus disease 2019 in China. N Engl J Med. 2020.

- <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2002032>

UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research & Education

- <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/reduce-your-risk-serious-lung-disease-caused-corona-virus-quitting-smoking-and-vaping>

American Lung Association

- <https://www.lung.org/blog/smoking-and-covid19>

American Thoracic Society

- <https://thoracic.org/patients>
 - EVALI
 - E-cigarettes/Vaping
 - Prescription medicines to stop smoking
 - Second and third-hand smoke

PLOS Meta-Analysis

- <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0233147>

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