

# Smoking, Vaping, and COVID-19

## GOING SMOKE-FREE OR VAPE-FREE: REDUCING YOUR RISKS FOR COVID-19

COVID-19 spreads by droplets from your mouth and nose, including saliva, so it can be spread by smoking or vaping, or by sharing these products with others.

### To reduce your risk of getting, or spreading, COVID-19:

- Do not share your smoke or vape with anyone.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water before and after smoking or vaping.
- Smoke or vape outside and away from others.
- Stay at least two metres (six feet) apart if smoking or vaping in a group.
- Do not smoke or vape around the elderly or those with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems; these groups are at the highest risk for poor health outcomes from COVID-19.



Even if you are not in a “higher risk” category, it is important to remember that COVID-19 still presents a risk for everyone – even young, healthy people. In fact, a recent study suggests that vaping may be linked to a much higher risk of COVID-19 among teenagers and young adults.<sup>1</sup>

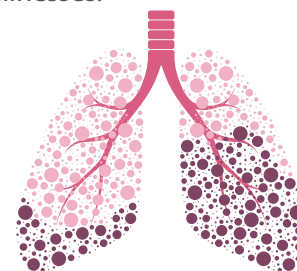
### Smokers and vapers are at higher risk of serious illness if they get COVID-19.

You, or the people who care about you, may be worried about a connection between COVID-19 and smoking. Scientists are still learning about the virus.

However, we know that smoking and vaping causes lung damage, which means that people who smoke or vape – even younger people – are at higher risk of more severe symptoms and complications from COVID-19. People who smoke or vape – especially those who have lung, heart or other health conditions – are also more likely to be admitted to an ICU, need ventilation (i.e., assistance with breathing) or die compared to non-smokers.<sup>2</sup>

### Smoking or vaping can increase your risk for COVID-19 because:

- It weakens your immune system, which decreases your body’s natural ability to fight infections and increases the risk of lung illnesses.
- Your lungs produce more ACE2 receptors, a protein that acts as a “doorway” for the COVID-19 virus.
- Smoking or vaping increases the possibility of transferring the virus from hand to mouth.



### There’s never been a better time to quit smoking or vaping.

**There is good news:** almost as soon as you stop smoking, your body starts to heal. In the first few weeks and months, your lungs start working better and your risk for a heart attack goes down. The longer you are smoke-free, the more time your body has to recover.

Good lung and heart health is essential for people with COVID-19 to respond positively to medical treatment and recover from the illness. Quitting or reducing smoking or vaping is the best thing you can do to protect your lung and heart health at this time.



<sup>1</sup>Gaiha, S. M., Cheng, J., & Halpern-Felsher, B. (2020). Association between youth smoking, electronic cigarette use, and COVID-19. *Journal of adolescent health, 67*(4), 519-523.

<sup>2</sup>Vardavas, C. I., & Nikitara, K. (2020). COVID-19 and smoking: A systematic review of the evidence. *Tobacco induced diseases, 18*.

## TAKE THE NEXT STEP TODAY!

If you have started smoking again, consider recommitting to a smoke-free life today. **Quitting is not easy, but it's one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself and others during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

No matter how old you are, or how long you've been smoking, it's never too late to quit. Although different approaches work for different people, the most effective way to quit is usually through a combination of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or cessation medication and counselling support.

### **If you are ready to quit, you don't have to do it alone – help is available!**

- Talk to your health care provider
- Call the Smoker's Helpline at 1-877-513-5333
- Go online to learn more about the [PEI Smoking Cessation Program](#)

