

Important Facts on Smoking and COVID-19

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ✓ Cigarette smoking **can suppress the immune system.**
- ✓ Cigarette smoking **causes underlying conditions** that increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including heart and lung diseases and diabetes.
- ✓ A person who smokes may be **at greater risk** for, and may have a **harder time recovering** from, COVID-19.
- ✓ For help quitting tobacco use or staying tobacco free, call **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** or visit **www.quitlinenc.com.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Cigarette smoking can suppress the immune system.

There is enough evidence to be certain that cigarette smoking compromises the immune system and that altered immunity is associated with an increased risk for pulmonary infections (U.S. Surgeon General, 2014).

Cigarette smoking causes underlying conditions that increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including heart and lung diseases and diabetes.

Cigarette smoking is a major risk factor for chronic lung disease (including asthma), diabetes and many cancers, including lung cancer. (U.S. Surgeon General, 2014). People with these underlying medical conditions are at a greater risk for severe COVID-19 illness (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 8, 2020).

One study showed that 90 percent of a group of hospitalized COVID-19 patients had one or more underlying condition, including hypertension, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, with chronic lung disease being the most common (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 8, 2020).

A person who smokes may be at greater risk for, and may have a harder time recovering from, COVID-19.

Smoking is related to higher expression of an enzyme (ACE2), the receptor for SARS-CoV-2, which is the virus that causes COVID-19. This puts people who smoke at higher risk and has been proven in preliminary studies in China, but not yet confirmed in the U.S. (Journal of Clinical Medicine, March 20, 2020).

Smoking is a risk factor for progression of COVID-19, with smokers having higher odds of COVID-19 progression than never smokers. (Patanavanich & Glantz, Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 2020)

The relationship between the use of e-cigarettes, or vaping products, and risk of COVID-19 is uncertain because they are new.

While studies showing specific risks of vaping or e-cigarette use are still relatively new compared to studies regarding smoking, there are some studies on these newer tobacco products that raise concern. Because vaping is known to cause inflammation in the lungs, some organizations suspect regular vaping may leave lung tissue fragile and more susceptible to infection (American Lung Association, 2020).

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The lungs start to heal two to 12 weeks after quitting smoking (U.S. Surgeon General, 2004).

Stay Informed

For frequently updated information, visit the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) COVID-19 website at www.ncdhhs.gov/covid19, and visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 website at www.cdc.gov/COVID19.

