

COVID and substance use: What youth and families need to know



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While COVID-19 is less likely to cause serious symptoms in younger people, in combination with substance use like vaping or smoking cigarettes or cannabis, it could pose a serious health threat.

- Vaping and smoking—cigarettes or cannabis—weaken the lung’s regular defenses and affect cardiovascular health.
- Vaping and smoking—cigarettes or cannabis—based on adult observations, may put young people at increased risk of severe coronavirus infection.
- Young people who smoke or vape may be more likely to develop complications from coronavirus like pneumonia or acute respiratory distress, which could result in hospitalization and/or treatment in an intensive care unit.

Vaping and smoking—cigarettes or cannabis—is also frequently a social activity, which increases the risk of a COVID-19 infection: Sharing, accessing/purchasing vaping materials and or cigarettes and cannabis products all increase a youth’s contacts with other individuals who might have been exposed to coronavirus.

Vaping and smoking with others should be strictly avoided at all times.

This period of social distancing and isolation is an opportunity to set vaping/smoking cessation goals for those who vape. Young people with an addiction to nicotine vaping and/or cigarette smoking should consider contacting their paediatrician or other health care professional, who can provide a prescription for nicotine replacement treatment (such as patches, gums and lozenges), which can help cut down on vaping and smoking and reduce nicotine cravings and withdrawal.

For more information:

- Reduce your risk of serious lung disease caused by corona virus by quitting smoking and vaping: Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, UCSF, March 6, 2020
- COVID-19: Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders: National Institute on Drug Abuse, March 12, 2020
- Smoking or Vaping May Increase the Risk of a Severe Coronavirus Infection, Scientific American, March 17, 2020
- How smoking, vaping and drug use might increase risks from Covid-19, CNN, March 20 2020

Created March 2020. More information on COVID-19 and children and youth, visit www.cps.ca