

COVID-19 More Severe for Smokers & Vapers

People who smoke or vape are not yet in the high-risk category to get COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), but, if they get the virus they can expect a more intense infection and more severe symptoms.

“I think anybody that smokes or vapes -- that inhales anything toxic into their lungs -- is probably putting their lungs at risk, because the toxins and irritants can alter the lung’s immune defense,” David Beuther, MD, a pulmonologist and Chief Medical Information Officer at National Jewish Health. “It reduces your own lung’s ability to defend against the virus.”



According to Thomas Ylioja, PhD, a tobacco cessation expert and the Clinical Director for Health Initiatives at National Jewish Health, early data from China show that people infected with COVID-19 who smoke have worse outcomes than patients who did not.

“The odds of disease progression, including to death, were 14 times higher among people with a history of smoking,” Dr. Ylioja said.

Vaping Also Decreases Ability to Fight Viruses

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, National Jewish Health was researching how e-cigarette vapor affects the lungs. Hong Wei Chu, MD, a pulmonologist and researcher at National Jewish Health, found that similar to smoking, vaping decreases the body’s ability to fight off diseases like COVID-19.

Quit Now to Better Defend Yourself from COVID-19

“The body almost immediately begins to recover when a smoker or vaper quits,” Dr. Ylioja explained. “Most people know quitting tobacco is an important step in protecting their health in general. In addition to social distancing, washing your hands, and staying home, quitting smoking or vaping can be an important step to defend yourself from COVID-19.”

National Jewish Health has resources available to help people stop smoking or vaping. For help quitting, adults can call 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669) and youth ages 12-17 can visit www.mylifemyquit.com or call or text 855.891.9989.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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