



OUTSIDE THE BODY

For people with SUD, there are many other factors to consider when determining the dangers of COVID-19.

- Access to health care is a challenge for people with substance use disorders because of the stigma surrounding them and not having insurance.
- Struggling with a steady income, the possibility of homelessness is prevalent.
- The probability of incarceration is greater than for someone without an SUD.

All 3 situations put them at higher risk of being exposed to the coronavirus because of their inability to self-isolate.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Think you know everything about COVID-19? Test your knowledge with these True or False questions.

1. Those who use opioids, meth, cannabis, tobacco, or vape are at a much lower risk of the virus and all of the health conditions that come along with it.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. A person who uses a vape pen is at a lower risk of feeling the effects of COVID-19 than a person who smokes cigarettes.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Smoking is the number one cause of COPD.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Methamphetamine puts less pressure on your blood vessels.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. People with substance use disorders are more likely to become incarcerated.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answers: 1.F 2.F 3.T 4.F 5.T

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COVID-19 AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS



A HIGHER RISK



DANGER TO YOUR LUNGS

On December 31, 2019, an unknown cause of pneumonia was reported in Wuhan, China. As January 2020 progresses, it is becoming clear that the novel coronavirus outbreak is a global threat to human health. As it is studied, and tested and found to attack the respiratory system, it is named COVID-19, for Corona Virus Disease 2019, by the WHO (World Health Organization) in February. This is concerning to those with irregular lung function or pre-existing lung conditions related to substance use disorders (SUD).

As we learn more about it, there is cause to believe that people with SUD are at a much higher risk when diagnosed with COVID-19 because it attacks the lungs. This means those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape, are at a higher risk. People with opioid use disorder (OUD) and methamphetamine use disorder are also at risk because of the effects these substances have on respiratory and pulmonary health. These folks may also be at high risk for homelessness and incarceration, which will put them at high risk for contracting coronavirus.

SMOKING & VAPING

- **Smoking** - When someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, it is important to find out about underlying health conditions that may affect the lungs, such as COPD. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), blocks the air going in and out of your lungs, which makes it very difficult to breathe. COPD is most commonly caused by smoking tobacco. Smokers have also been found to be more at risk of recovering from COVID-19 because of an enzyme in the lungs - ACE2 (the receptor for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus2).



- **Vaping** - Over 2,807 EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury) hospitalized cases and over 68 deaths related to vaping and nearly half were treated for respiratory failure. Most patients reported that their e-cigs or vapes contained THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol), a cannabinoid identified in cannabis. Vitamin E-acetate is widely used in these vapes and may interfere with normal lung functioning. This is important because people who vape, now have COVID-19 to consider as a possibility for landing themselves in the hospital and/or dying as a result.



OPIOIDS & METH

- **Opioids** - Those who overuse opioids and suffer from opioid use disorder (OUD) may face other problems if they contract COVID-19. Opioids are proven to cause slower breathing, which not only puts the user at risk of overdose, but may cause hypoxemia, which is an extreme decrease of oxygen in the blood. Chronic respiratory disease is already known to increase the risk of overdose deaths among people taking opioids. With diminished lung capacity from COVID-19, the risk of overdose deaths is even greater than before.
- **Meth** - Methamphetamine puts heavy pressure on the blood vessels, which leads to conditions such as, pulmonary damage and pulmonary hypertension. This makes blood pressure extremely high. It affects the lungs and the right side of the heart. This is a hazard for someone who contracts COVID-19.

