The Best Thing You Can Do During the Pandemic: Quit Vaping

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stressful time for everyone. Stress can lead to greater tobacco consumption, but it is critical to consider reducing or stopping that consumption. The most effective and safest way to quit is to consult a medical professional. In addition to receiving medical guidance, some other tips are to:

- Reflect on what triggers you to vape
- Incorporate new, less harmful daily rituals (e.g., making a cup of tea or going for a walk)
- Join support networks online
- Enlist help and support from loved ones
- Avoid situations that tempt you to vape
- Picture your life without vaping

Quitting may be difficult and require several tries, but you owe it to yourself and loved ones to try.

Test Your Knowledge

How does vaping affect your body? Let's test your knowledge.

1. The respiratory system plays a key role in eliminating carbon dioxide from your body.
   a. True b. False
2. Vaping does not affect your risk of contracting COVID-19.
   a. True b. False
3. Popcorn lung, a condition sometimes caused by vaping, does not have a cure.
   a. True b. False
4. Collapsed lung can be caused by vaping
   a. True b. False
5. Only older adult populations are at risk for dying from COVID-19.
   a. True b. False
6. If you have a collapsed lung, you may be treated with supplemental oxygen, chest tubes, or surgery.
   a. True b. False

Answers: 1.a 2.b 3.a 4.a 5.b 6.a

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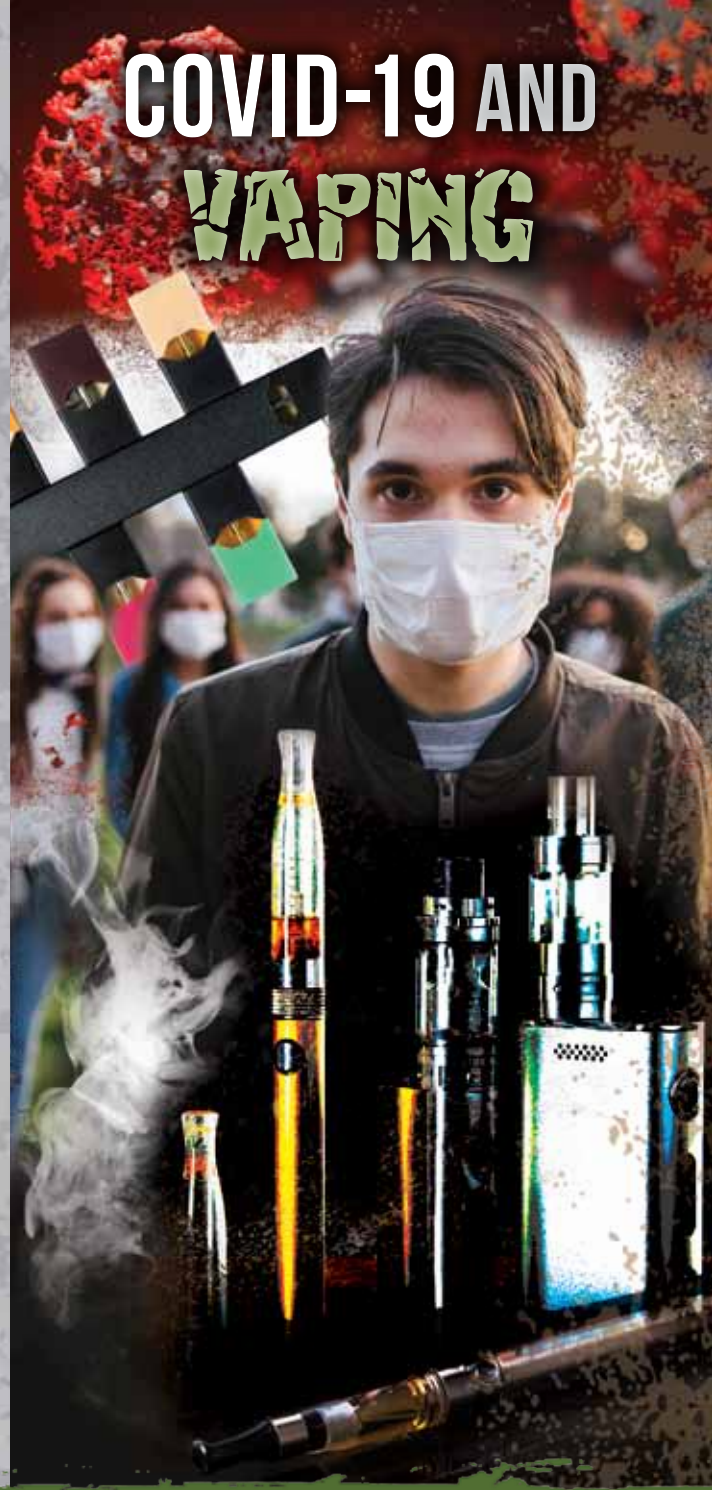
COVID-19 AND VAPING



High Risk Habit

COVID-19 & Vaping

COVID-19 fatality rates are higher for older populations, but younger people are not immune from its disastrous consequences. What's more – vaping greatly increases both the risk for contracting COVID-19 and mortality rates in younger people. Individuals who vape are nearly 7 times as likely to contract COVID-19.

The reason vaping poses additional risks during the COVID-19 pandemic is simple. Both the virus and vaping aggressively target the same organ: lungs. Lungs help your body take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide. Without having at least one lung (though, two is preferable!), your body would find it impossible to live on its own, without extreme medical intervention.

Vaping launches a direct attack on your lungs as soon as your inhale. Harmful chemicals (e.g., nicotine or THC) coat your lungs and get deep into the organs, causing inflammation. Vaping has led to severe respiratory conditions, such as "popcorn lung," lipoid pneumonia, and collapsed lung.

The inflammation caused by vaping and predisposition to respiratory conditions create a perfect storm for the COVID-19 virus to cause harm in individual's who vape. Before beginning this habit, it is critical to understand the consequences of vaping during a pandemic. If you already vape, now is the best time to try stopping.

Dangers of Vaping to Your Respiratory System

The respiratory system keeps you alive by administering oxygen through your blood stream and organs. The organs, tissues, airways, lungs, and blood vessels all work together to fuel your body's essential need for oxygen. The respiratory system then eliminates the byproduct of oxygen processing, carbon dioxide. These steps are the basic process behind your every inhale and exhale.

If you've ever entered a holding-your-breath-competition, you know how uncomfortable it is to not be able to breathe. Unlike a contest, however, some people are not able to resume breathing normally when they struggle for air. Vaping can lead to conditions that require intensive medical treatments to breathe effectively. Some conditions that vaping can lead to are "popcorn lung," lipoid pneumonia, and collapsed lung.

"Popcorn lung," or bronchiolitis obliterans, is caused by the inhalation of a chemical in many vapes, known as Diacetyl. This chemical inflames internal air passages and can leave scar tissue. These effects make it difficult for the individual to breathe and causes excessive coughing. Unfortunately, there is no known cure or treatment for this condition.

Lipoid pneumonia is different than regular pneumonia because it enters the respiratory system through oils in vapor. Like traditional pneumonia, symptoms can include coughing, difficulty breathing, and blood in your mucus.

Collapsed lung is about as jarring as the name sounds. Before vaping, collapsed lung was typically seen in gunshot cases when the bullet punctures the lungs and creates a hole, like an innertube being punctured. Collapsed lung also occurs when blisters and tiny tears are present in the lungs and worsened by an external cause, such as vaping. When a patient has collapsed lung they may be treated with supplemental oxygen, chest tubes, or surgery.

Scientists have also recently discovered a new vaping-related respiratory illness, E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI). EVALI is a potentially fatal respiratory illness recognized by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) after an increase of vaping related hospital admissions. One contributing factor to EVALI is the addition of Vitamin E-acetate.

Dangers of Vaping to Your Immune System

Not only is vaping a threat to your respiratory system, but new studies have found that it is a threat to your immune system, as well. The immune system acts as a fierce defender of your body by protecting it from harmful substances, such as bacteria, toxins, and viruses. When the immune system comes into contact with a harmful substance, it springs into action to eliminate the threat.

Vaping directly affects immune system cells that are known to remove bacteria and other harmful particles. By weakening the body's cellular response, vaping may make you more susceptible to contracting an illness, which can be especially dangerous during the time of COVID-19.

Because the COVID-19 virus can have such detrimental effects on the body, it's important to have a strong task force fighting against it. If immune system cells are being killed off from vaping, then the body has a smaller army to fight against it at an early stage.

Further, vaping causes bodily inflammation which has a negative effect on the immune system. Though inflammation is an essential immune system reaction at times, chronic inflammation (through causes such as vaping) can weaken the immune system and lead to chronic diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Through chronic inflammation, your body's immune system begins to damage other organs.

At a time when a deadly virus is spreading at unprecedented rates, it's important to ensure we're doing all that we can to strengthen our immune systems, not tear them down. Vaping pokes holes in the immune system's armor and weakens the defense.