



### **Worried about smoking or vaping and COVID-19? We can help.**

If you are experiencing increased stress, loneliness, anxiety, or other feelings because of COVID-19, you are not alone. We encourage you to reach out to your healthcare provider by phone or other virtual options like telehealth. Quitlines also provide an opportunity to get support to identify healthy coping skills to use instead of smoking or vaping. Regardless of your readiness to quit, the Quitline has resources for you.

### **COVID-19 and Chronic Health Conditions**

People who have underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for severe illness from the new coronavirus. Early data from the COVID-19 pandemic show that people who smoke may have more severe illness compared to people who never smoked. There are several reasons that smoking may be connected with an increased risk of complications:

- Smoking can weaken the immune system and increase the risk of lung and chest infections
- Smoking damages the lungs and causes lung disease
- Smoking can cause medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and many forms of cancer, and these conditions are linked with poorer COVID-19 outcomes
- There is growing evidence that e-cigarette use (vaping) can also harm lung health and decrease immunity to infections.
- Smoking and vaping can increase the possibility for COVID-19 to be transmitted from hands to mouth.
- Secondhand smoke exposure is known to worsen lung health in nonsmokers, especially children.

### **Quitting Tobacco**

Stopping smoking has many health benefits, even beyond a link with COVID-19, so it's always a good time to quit. Within just 20 minutes of smoking your last cigarette, your body will have positive changes that continue for years.

Nicotine is very addictive and quitting is hard, especially during times of stress. If you're concerned about smoking or vaping and want to make a change, **we can help**.

Whether you're ready to quit today, want help to stay quit, or are just thinking about taking the first step, we have a plan that can work for you. Our Quitline Coaches help you:

- design a personalized plan
- find ways to manage stress and anxiety
- talk about how to use medication that increases your chance of quitting successfully
- discuss ways to protect your family from secondhand smoke, such as making your home and car smoke-free
- and more.



### **Stress, anxiety, withdrawal, and coping**

The COVID-19 pandemic is stressful and brings up more feelings of anxiety or worry than usual. Stress and mood changes often trigger cravings to want to use smoke or vape. Plus, the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, like feeling irritable, restless, or feeling down, can also feel like stress.

Some people feel more urgency to quit smoking or vaping to improve their health now, but are concerned about how to manage stress and withdrawal during an unusually stressful time. The changes in routine that COVID-19 has brought for many people can create a unique opportunity to change other behaviors. Changing your daily habits and surroundings can make it easier to avoid the places and times when you used to smoke or vape.

Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. Here are some self-care ideas to try:

- Limit your screen time. Take breaks from watching or reading news about COVID-19, including social media. Repeatedly hearing about the pandemic can be upsetting.
- Take deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose and out slowly through your mouth, blowing all the stress out of the body. Deep breathing can slow the heartbeat and produce relaxation.
- Take care of your body. Try to eat healthy, stay hydrated, and move your body each day.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs.
- Laugh out loud. Find something funny to lighten your mood. It's good to laugh, and laughter is the best medicine!
- Stay connected. Get support from others by talking over the phone or by video chat. Reconnect with old friends, cook a meal and share dinner over video.
- Use support. Try nicotine replacement products like the patch, gum, or lozenge. Relieving symptoms of nicotine withdrawal will make it much easier to manage stress and other triggers.

At the Quitline, our Coaches help you identify the strategies you can use to manage stress and withdrawal. Talk to your Coach about the ways you have effectively managed stress in the past, and what new ways you can try to stay safe and healthy now. All services are free, confidential, and judgment-free.

**Connect with your personal quitting coach today. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or sign up at [coquitline.org](https://coquitline.org).**