

# Tobacco use and COVID-19

*Information for people who smoke*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is important to understand the role that smoking may play in catching and passing on the virus. Although more research is needed, this resource is based on the latest evidence as of March 2020. It also includes tips and resources for quitting or reducing smoking during the pandemic.

## How does smoking affect the risk of getting COVID-19?

- COVID-19 affects your lungs, chest and other parts of your breathing system. When you inhale cigarette smoke, chemicals damage your lungs and weaken your immune response. This can cause viruses to enter your lungs more easily and increase your chance of getting respiratory infections, such as COVID-19.
- The action of moving cigarettes from your hand to your mouth, as well as sharing cigarettes with others, can also increase your risk of catching and transmitting COVID-19.

## Do smokers have worse symptoms of COVID-19?

- Current and past smokers are more likely than other people to have severe symptoms of COVID-19, such as pneumonia.
- Current and past smokers are also at a higher risk than others of needing admission to the ICU and mechanical ventilation, and are at a higher risk of death.
- Exposure to second-hand smoke can cause damage to the heart and lungs, which could increase the risk of more serious symptoms of COVID-19 for those around you.



This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit [www.camh.ca/covid19](http://www.camh.ca/covid19)

## How can I manage my smoking during the pandemic?

You may feel a strong urge to smoke to help you cope with feelings of stress, loneliness and boredom. But quitting is the most important thing you can do for your overall health, and may reduce your chance of getting COVID-19. Here are some tips for managing cravings during the pandemic:

Seek support and stay connected with family and friends by phone, text and video.

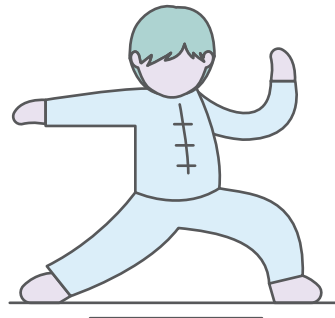
You can also share your thoughts and progress on Twitter with the hashtag #QuitforCovid.



Keep busy with healthy and enjoyable activities, while staying at a safe distance from others.

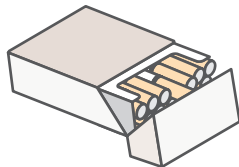
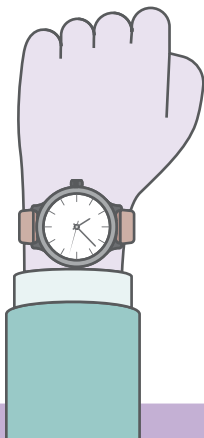


Track your cravings, cigarettes, mood and activities each day. You might start to identify triggers for your smoking. iPhone users can use the My Change Plan app (download for free from the App Store).



Plan how you will manage triggers and cravings. For example, spend more time doing things that keep you from smoking or away from cigarettes.

A craving may pass, so delay smoking for as long as you can.



Call your pharmacist to explore whether quit-smoking medications might be an option for you and how you can get them during the pandemic.

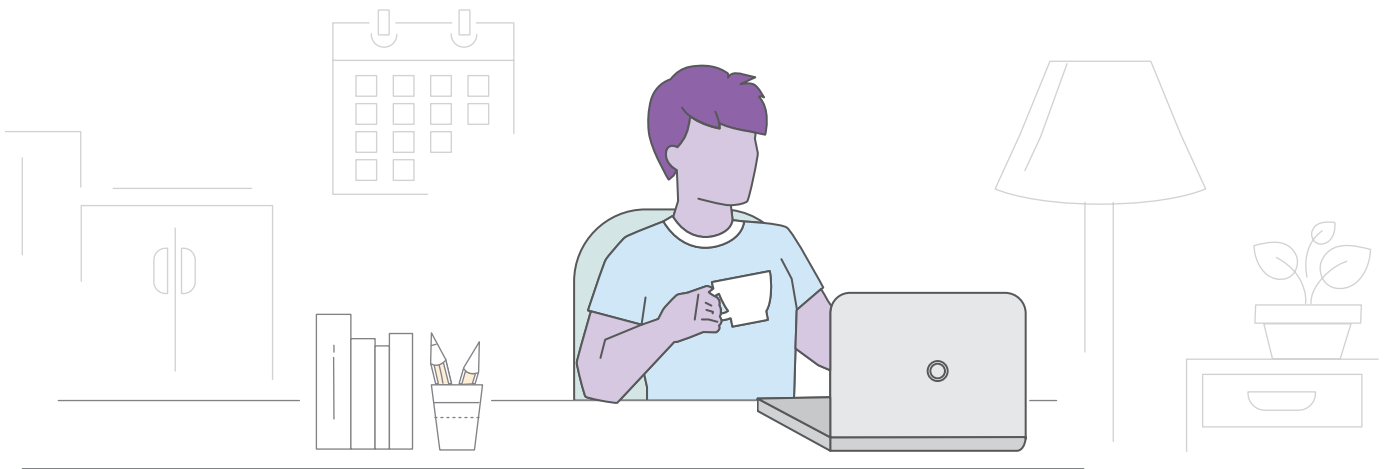


## Resources for support on smoking and vaping

- Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic: [www.camh.ca/covid19](http://www.camh.ca/covid19)
- FAQs on Smoking, Vaping and COVID-19: [www.otru.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/otru\\_covidfaqs\\_mar2020.pdf](http://www.otru.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/otru_covidfaqs_mar2020.pdf)
- Smoker's Helpline: A free service offering support and information about quitting smoking. Visit [www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca) for online support, text iQUIT to 123456, or call Telehealth Canada at 1 866 797-0000.
- ConnexOntario: Free and confidential services for people experiencing issues with addictions and mental health. Call 1 866 531-2600 or visit [www.connexontario.ca](http://www.connexontario.ca)
- CAMH Nicotine Dependence Service: Information and resources on quitting smoking. Visit [www.nicotinedependenceclinic.com](http://www.nicotinedependenceclinic.com)

Below are a few resources you may find helpful:

- **Tobacco use and mood management**
- **Tobacco use and physical activity**
- **Tobacco use nutrition and weight**
- **My Change Plan app**: Download for free from the Apple App Store (iPhone users only)



This information sheet is not intended to be a resource for people who require screening for COVID-19 or who are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

For more information, visit [www.camh.ca/covid19](http://www.camh.ca/covid19)