

# COVID-19: the connection to smoking and vaping, and resources for quitting

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The news about the COVID-19 global pandemic has everyone concerned. Those who smoke or vape e-cigarettes, or care about someone who does, may be especially worried because the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 attacks the lungs and could be a particularly serious threat to tobacco users.

While the data are early in terms of the specific impacts of the virus on people using tobacco, there is conclusive evidence that smoking weakens the immune system, increases the risk of infectious diseases and respiratory infections, and is a major cause of chronic health conditions and cancer. There is also growing evidence that vaping can harm lung health.

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This is deeply concerning given that more than 34 million Americans smoke and tobacco use among our nation's youth is at its highest rate in nearly two decades, driven by the youth e-cigarette epidemic. Vaping among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders has more than doubled since 2017. According to the 2019 National Youth Tobacco survey, 27.5% of high school and 10.5% of middle school students use e-cigarettes, with 21% of high schoolers vaping on a near daily basis.

As we confront the coronavirus, it is more important than ever for smokers to quit and for youth and young adults to stop using all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to protect their health. This is especially true given new [Centers for Disease Control data](#) reporting that 38% of hospitalized coronavirus patients in the U.S. were younger adults (20-54 years old), showing that the virus is severely impacting younger people more than previously thought. With teenagers and young adults now at home and adjusting to abrupt physical isolation, canceling plans and moving many activities like school online, young people may find themselves vaping even more or experiencing difficult withdrawal symptoms if they are unable to access e-cigarettes.

Overcoming nicotine addiction is difficult to begin with, under normal circumstances, and stress and anxiety are often triggers to smoke or vape, especially during uncertain times. As part of our commitment to make tobacco use a thing of the past, Truth Initiative has evidence-based resources to help people quit.

These resources include the first-of-its-kind quit vaping program for young people and for parents who want to help them, as well as proven-effective quit programs for people who smoke or use other tobacco products that have helped over 800,000 adult users on their journey to quit.

## Resources to quit vaping and smoking now

Research has shown that Truth Initiative programs can quadruple a tobacco user's chance of quitting. Here are the programs and resources we offer.

### This is Quitting

**This is Quitting**, an anonymous text message program designed to help teens and young adults quit vaping, is already helping more than 145,000 young e-cigarette users to stop vaping. The program, which was built with input from young people who have attempted to or successfully quit, is tailored by age group to give appropriate recommendations about quitting. It offers tips, encouragement and a sense of community, including information about building skills to help manage stress and reduce anxiety related to quitting. **Preliminary data about the program** published in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* show after just two weeks of using This is Quitting, more than half — 60.8% — reported that they had reduced or stopped using e-cigarettes.

Teens and young adults can access this program by texting **DitchJUUL” to 88-709** and get immediate help and parents of young people who vape can get support at [www.becomeanex.org](http://www.becomeanex.org).

### BecomeAnEX and the EX Program

BecomeAnEX, a digital quit-smoking plan and online community of thousands of smokers and ex-smokers, has helped more than 800,000 people develop the skills and confidence to successfully quit. The comprehensive program, which also helps users quit vaping, chewing or dipping, helps people quit with tailored resources and the most up-to-date guidance on quitting from our partners at Mayo Clinic. **The EX**

**Community** on BecomeAnEX can help people stay connected with their quit in an accepting social network available 24/7. BecomeAnEX is also the foundation for **the EX Program**, our enterprise quit program for employers and health plans to help their employees, members and their families. ([Learn more about the EX Program.](#))

## Additional resources and information

Those considering quitting can learn more about all these tools at [truthinitiative.org/what-we-do/quit-smoking-tools](https://truthinitiative.org/what-we-do/quit-smoking-tools). Additional tips and information about quitting, including “[Quitting vaping? Here are 5 tips for handling nicotine withdrawal](#),” “[How to help your child quit vaping](#),” and “[Young ex-vapers share their experience and advice on quitting vaping](#),” can also be found on the [Truth Initiative website](#).

The National Institute on Drug Abuse has also posted information on the topic in a [blog](#) post, which stated that people with substance-use disorders, including those who vape, could be especially hard-hit by COVID-19. We also encourage you to visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) for updates on the latest information from scientific experts, which we will continue to monitor.