

Prognosis

Smoking Helps Open Gateway to Coronavirus Infection, Study Shows

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- ▶ Cigarette use may elevate enzymes that allow virus to get in
 - ▶ Study by St. Paul's Hospital published in medical journal
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Smoking may raise the risk of Covid-19 by elevating enzymes that allow the coronavirus to gain access into lung cells, according to a new study.

Smokers and people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease may have elevated levels of an enzyme called ACE-2, which helps the virus enter cells in their lungs, where it replicates, a study published in the European Respiratory Journal Thursday showed.

Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions have emerged as factors that make people vulnerable to Covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus that's sweeping the world in a pandemic.

The research, led by Janice Leung, a respirologist at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, is an observational study based on data emerging from China and was peer reviewed. In China, where the mortality rate is higher for men than women, about half of males smoke, according to the World Health Organization. That compares with some 2% for females.

“There has never been a better time to quit smoking to protect yourself from Covid-19, ” Leung said.

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Samples were taken from the lungs of 21 patients with COPD and 21 people not suffering from COPD. Higher levels of ACE-2 were found both in COPD patients and current smokers.

The researchers also cross-referenced their findings with two existing study groups that include more test subjects, and came to the same conclusion.

[Read more: European Smokers, Vapers Still Get Their Fix During Lockdowns](#)

Michael R. Bloomberg, founder and majority owner of Bloomberg News parent Bloomberg LP, has campaigned and given money in support of a nationwide ban on flavored e-cigarettes and tobacco.