



## Smoking Cessation and COVID-19

With the outbreak of COVID-19 in the US, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, there have been many news reports suggesting that smoking and vaping might increase the risk for getting COVID-19 or suffering more severe complications. In fact, there are a lot of questions about whether smoking and COVID-19 are linked. The American Cancer Society's Scientific Vice President, Economic and Health Policy Research Jeffrey Drope, PhD, has written a [new article on cancer.org](#) answering a lot of the questions we're hearing. What we know for sure is that **smoking can weaken the immune system and put people at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (Source: [CDC](#))**.

Unquestionably, people who smoke are more likely to face challenges that make it difficult to avoid the new coronavirus. **The effects of COVID-19 provide yet another example of socioeconomic and racial inequities in the United States.** While smoking has declined in the U.S. to its lowest level in many decades ([13.7%](#)), not all groups have experienced this decline. Individuals with lower education, lower socioeconomic status, are uninsured or on Medicaid, and/or have behavioral health conditions smoke at much higher rates than the general population. (Source: [ACS](#)). They often have jobs that make them unable to shelter in place, and often rely on public transportation to go to work. They may work in an environment where social distancing is difficult to maintain, or they may live with someone who experiences these difficulties. They may begin to smoke inside if they don't feel it's safe outdoors, and there's increasing concern they could be evicted if smoking indoors is a violation of their lease.

These disparities play out in African American communities: although African Americans usually smoke fewer cigarettes and start smoking cigarettes at an older age, they are more likely to die from smoking-related diseases than Whites. Additionally, African American children and adults are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke than any other racial or ethnic group (Source: [CDC](#)). NAATPN has developed [Surviving in the Shift](#) to help African Americans thrive even in this time of uncertainty. You can find resources and tips for family time, finances, and reducing coronavirus risk.

***Tobacco cessation is a social justice issue, and it's more important than ever.***

## **Resources**

[Smoke-free Public Housing: Helping Smokers Quit](#), [NAATPN](#), and [Clean Air for All](#) can recommend resources from trusted organizations for health systems, property managers, and public housing administrators to help individuals access tobacco cessation services and reduce secondhand smoke levels, even during this pandemic.

### **For health systems**

We have put together some [FAQs](#) from our [Smoke-free Public Housing: Helping Smokers Quit](#) initiative with sections for public housing agencies, health care providers, and all sectors. These FAQs include information about how to better support people looking to quit smoking, how health systems can improve internal protocols to screen more patients, how quitlines work, how to correctly use [nicotine replacement therapy](#), and more. Here are a few more helpful resources for health systems:

<a href="#">Million Hearts Tobacco Cessation Change Package</a>	Quality improvement tool created by the CDC intended for health care professionals in outpatient, inpatient, and behavioral health settings, and public health professionals who partner with these groups. It presents a list of process improvements that clinicians can implement as they seek to deliver optimal treatment to patients who use tobacco, and is a practical resource to increase the reach and effectiveness of tobacco cessation interventions in the clinical workflow.
<a href="#">Billing Guide for Tobacco Screening and Cessation (American Lung Association)</a> <a href="#">Billing Guide Addendum for Behavioral Health (American Lung Association)</a>	Tobacco Use Disorder can be effectively treated in health care settings and is considered a billable service by Medicare, Medicaid, and many commercial insurance carriers. Find out more to optimize the chance of successful billing.
<a href="#">National Center for Health in Public Housing smoke-free resources</a>	Health centers located in or immediately accessible to public housing are the primary source of health care for this special population. The longer the smoking ban is in effect, it is likely that many public housing residents will attempt to quit tobacco products, resulting in a higher need for smoking cessation and counseling services.
<a href="#">Smoking Cessation Leadership Center Toolkits for Hospitals and Health Systems</a>	A variety of packaged resources, at-a-glance flyers, and tools to aid cessation efforts at your health center/clinic.
<a href="#">North American Quitline Consortium Map</a>	This map provides information on the type of counseling and medication services available by phone and online at no cost to smokers in each state.

### For Property Managers

In addition to offering [Smoke-free Housing Recommendations during COVID-19](#), Clean Air for All offers a variety of free resources to help public housing authorities and other properties promote smoke-free policy compliance and connect their residents with cessation resources. **For individualized smoke-free housing assistance** and referrals to local support, contact Clean Air for All at [info@smokefreepublichousingproject.org](mailto:info@smokefreepublichousingproject.org) or 651-646-3005 ext. 325.

<a href="#">Smoke-Free Public Housing Compliance and Enforcement Toolkit</a>	Digital toolkit including educational resources, sample documents, and communications materials to promote compliance and best practices for effective and equitable enforcement of smoke-free policies
<a href="#">Clean Air for All Newsletter</a>	Get updates on smoke-free housing news, upcoming webinars and events, new resources, tips, and more

### For individuals and everyone who wants to know more

Quitting tobacco takes commitment – and support. These resources can help individuals learn more about why they should make a plan to quit, and what’s available to them to help them quit smoking for good. Resources can also assist health systems and property managers helping their patients and residents quit.

<a href="#">Pathways to Freedom</a>	Pathways to Freedom: Leading the Way to a Smoke Free Community <sup>®</sup> is a free resource designed to assist individuals and community leaders in their efforts to become smokefree and end smoking-related diseases and death among African Americans.
<a href="#">CDC Tips from Former Smokers</a>	The <i>Tips</i> campaign profiles real people who are living with serious long-term health effects from smoking and secondhand smoke exposure, as well as nonsmokers who have experienced life-threatening episodes as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.
1-800-QUIT-NOW	The nationwide telephone portal connects callers with their local quitlines to deliver support and referrals to tobacco users to help them quit smoking in all U.S. states. Callers get access to many different types of cessation information and services, including free support and advice from a cessation counselor, a personalized quit plan and self-help materials, social support and coping strategies to help deal with cravings, and the latest information about cessation medications. Callers may get free NRT, and many quitlines offer texting programs.
<a href="#">CDC’s What Does a Quitline Do? video series</a>	These short videos help callers understand what a quitline is, what quit coaches can do, how to make a plan to quit, how they can help with quit-smoking medications, managing triggers and cravings, and handling setbacks.

**About Smoke-free Public Housing: Helping Smokers Quit**

The American Cancer Society, Smoking Cessation Leadership Center at UCSF, and the North American Quitline Consortium are collaborating with public housing agencies (PHAs), state quitlines, and community health centers to help residents in public housing quit smoking for good. This collaboration, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a pilot program in 6 communities to help all interested residents get support to quit smoking. In the wake of implementation of the HUD smoke-free rule, we seek to strengthen partnerships among residents, clinicians, PHAs, and other related organizations to contribute to the overall health, well-being, and equity of PHA communities. For more information, contact [Becky Slemons](#).

**About NAATPN**

[NAATPN, Inc.](#) is a 20-year-old organization that exists to facilitate the implementation and promotion of comprehensive policies, community-led programs, and culturally competent public health campaigns that benefit African Americans. We are committed to addressing the social and economic injustices that have marginalized our communities and led to deep health disparities. NAATPN is fortified by a network of community organizations, grassroots organizers, faith leaders, legislators, clinical service providers, researchers, and media professionals who use their expertise to inform our policy work and amplify our educational campaigns.

**About Clean Air for All**

Clean Air for All: The Smoke-Free Public Housing Project provides training and technical assistance to public housing agencies, resident services staff, and public housing residents impacted by HUD's smoke-free public housing rule. This project enhances stakeholders' capacity to transition to and maintain successful smoke-free public housing environments for all. Clean Air for All is a collaboration of Live Smoke Free (LSF) a program of the Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For more information, contact [Jackie Siewert](#).