

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to help your cancer treatment work better and reduce the side effects of treatment.

Being smoke-free also reduces the chance of your cancer coming back, or getting another kind of cancer.

### RADIATION THERAPY

- Radiation therapy works best when the amount of oxygen in your body is normal. When you smoke, your oxygen level drops, making it harder for radiation to do its job.
- If you can't stop smoking, avoid smoking before and after your radiation therapy appointment.

### CHEMOTHERAPY

- Chemotherapy drugs work better in people who don't smoke.
- Cigarette smoke has chemicals that can lower the amount of some chemotherapy drugs in your blood, making them less effective.

### SURGERY

- Quitting smoking, or reducing the number of cigarettes you smoke, can make surgery safer and help you recover faster.
- If possible, try to quit at least 4 weeks before your surgery. But quitting at any time before surgery is helpful.
- People who don't smoke:
  - are less likely to have complications during or after their surgery
  - are less likely to have infections
  - may heal faster and go home sooner

## Tips to help you quit

### The 4 Ds

You can learn how to avoid tobacco by using the 4 Ds:

<b>DELAY</b>	Cravings often go away within 3 to 5 minutes, so try to wait it out.
<b>DRINK WATER</b>	Instead of reaching for tobacco, reach for a glass of cold water.
<b>DISTRACT</b>	Find something to keep your mind and hands busy.
<b>DEEP BREATHING</b>	It can help you relax and push away the urge to smoke.

## Don't give up!

Smoking is an addiction and it can be hard to quit. It's common for people to slip up. Don't give up, and don't be hard on yourself. Remember to do the following:

- **Change the situation.** Avoid or leave places that you connect with smoking.
- **Think positively.** Think about how far you've come and do your best to keep going.
- **Take action.** Do something that makes it hard to smoke. For example, chew gum, drink some water, or go for a walk.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to a friend, family member or your cancer care team.
- **Don't quit quitting.** It is possible and you can do it!

Produced in collaboration with Ontario's Regional Cancer Programs and the Canadian Cancer Society Smokers Helpline.

Need this information in an accessible format?  
1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@ontariohealth.ca  
PCC4175

# Quit Smoking

The benefits for people with cancer



# It's never too late to quit smoking!

## How you can do it

**Using both counselling and medication can triple your chance of success. Start by talking to:**

- your cancer care team, including your psychosocial counsellor
- your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- your pharmacist
- your local public health unit

Your healthcare providers can help you decide which ways to quit may be best for you.

### COUNSELLING

A counsellor can help you create a quit plan that works for you. You can meet with a quit smoking counsellor in person, by phone or online.

- Ask about quit smoking programs at your cancer treatment centre or hospital.
- Call a Care Coach at Telehealth Ontario at **1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007)**, or the number on cigarette packages. Getting help over the phone through a quit line can more than double your chance of quitting.
- Get support from Smokers' Helpline in the following ways:
  - Visit **SmokersHelpline.ca** to access self-help materials, and join an online group of quitters and Quit Coaches.
  - Text the word **iQuit** to the number **123456** for text message support.
  - Visit **QuitMap.ca** to find a quit smoking counsellor or group in your community.

### MEDICATIONS

The cost of nicotine replacement therapy and prescription medications may be covered by some private insurance plans and public benefit programs (i.e., the Ontario Drug Benefit program and the Non-Insured Health Benefits program for First Nations and Inuit).

You can also visit **QuitMap.ca** to see if there are programs in your community that can help you find free or low-cost medications.

### Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

- NRT comes in many forms including patches, gum, lozenges, mouth spray and inhalers.
- Using NRT can double your chance of quitting by reducing nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- Combining the nicotine patch with another NRT product (gum, lozenge, spray or inhaler) can increase your chance of quitting compared with using a single product.
- NRT is sold in pharmacies and some stores. You do not need a prescription.

### Prescription medications

Two prescription drugs that do not contain nicotine are available to help reduce cravings and prevent relapse:

- Varenicline
- Bupropion

These drugs require a prescription from a doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist.



### Quitting smoking helps you feel better

- Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure will begin to improve.
- Within 2 days, your heart will be healthier.
- Within 3 months, your lung function will be better.
- In 1 year, your risk of heart disease is cut in half.

### Other ways to quit smoking

- Slowly reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke each day, also known as "reduce to quit."
- Quitting without using any medication or support, also known as "cold turkey."
- E-cigarettes or vaping might help if you find it hard to quit using the ways recommended in this brochure. Vaping products may be less harmful than smoking cigarettes, but the health risks are still unknown.
- Cytisine is a natural health product approved in Canada for smoking cessation. This product is available online and at some pharmacies.
- Alternative treatments, like acupuncture, laser therapy, hypnosis or other herbal remedies, have no research to show that they are safe or really work.



## Quitting smoking before surgery can make your surgery safer, help you heal faster and let you go home sooner

**Quit smoking at least 4 weeks before your surgery. If that is not possible, quitting any time before surgery is helpful.**

**Quitting smoking may lower your chances of getting COVID-19.**

Smoking increases how often your hand touches your face and the chemicals in smoke can make it harder for your body to fight viruses like COVID-19.

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### Why quit smoking before your surgery?

- You may spend less time in the hospital
- You are less likely to have problems during or after surgery
- Your surgical wounds (cuts) will heal faster and are less likely to get infected
- Your chance of getting a lung or chest infection after surgery will be lower

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### Best ways to quit smoking

- Talk to a quit smoking counsellor in person, by phone or online – they can help you create a plan for quitting smoking
- Ask about quit smoking programs at your hospital
- Call a Care Coach at Telehealth Ontario at **1-866-797-0000** (TTY **1-866-797-0007**) or the number on cigarette packages
- Get support from Smokers' Helpline:
  - Visit [SmokersHelpline.ca](https://www.smokershelpline.ca) to get self-help materials, and join an online group of quit coaches, and others trying to quit smoking
  - Text the word **iQuit** to the number **123456**
  - Visit [QuitMap.ca](https://www.quitmap.ca) to find a local quit smoking counsellor or group



**Using counselling and medication together can triple your chances of quitting smoking.**

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## Medications

- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)
  - Using the nicotine patch with another NRT product (gum, lozenge, mouth spray or inhaler) can increase your chances of quitting
  - NRT products are sold in pharmacies and some stores without a prescription, but speak to your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist about the best ways to use them
- Varenicline and bupropion
  - You need a prescription from a doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist to get these drugs

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## To help you decide the best way to quit, start by talking to:

- your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- your cancer care team, including your psychosocial counsellor
- your pharmacist
- your local public health unit

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## More information about quitting smoking

- Government of Ontario: [ontario.ca/page/support-quit-smoking](https://ontario.ca/page/support-quit-smoking)
- Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario): [cancercareontario.ca/stopsmoking](https://cancercareontario.ca/stopsmoking)
- Indigenous Tobacco Program: [tobaccowise.com](https://tobaccowise.com)

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# It is never too late to quit!



# Quitting smoking may lower your chances of getting COVID-19 and help your cancer treatment work better

## Facts about smoking, COVID-19 and cancer treatment:

- Smoking can increase the chances of COVID-19 moving from your hand into your mouth because when you smoke, your fingers often touch your mouth and lips
- Smoking and COVID-19 damage your lungs and other parts of your body
- The chemicals in cigarette smoke can stop cancer treatments from working well and they make it harder for your body to fight viruses like COVID-19

## To quit smoking or stay smoke free:



Talk to your cancer care team today



Call a Care Coach at  
Telehealth Ontario at

**1-866-797-0000**

(TTY **1-866-797-0007**)



Visit **SmokersHelpline.ca**

# It is never too late to quit!



**Ontario Health**  
Cancer Care Ontario



# Vaping

## and your health

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### Key points to remember:

- The best way to protect your health from the harms of vaping is not to vape, which includes not using e-cigarettes.
- Vaping can cause serious lung damage, trouble breathing, or a cough that lasts a long time or does not go away.
- If you vape or used to vape, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner if you have chest pain, trouble breathing or a cough. Go to the emergency room if your symptoms are serious and you cannot wait to talk to your doctor.
- Young people who vape may be more likely to try smoking cigarettes.
- Vaping devices with nicotine are addictive, which means it can be hard to quit vaping.
- There is not enough information on the long-term harms of vaping to know all related health effects.

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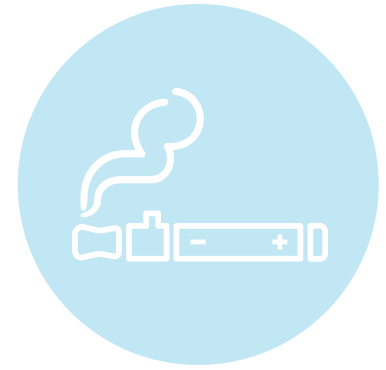
### If you smoke tobacco:

- Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health.
- More research is needed to find out whether vaping, including using e-cigarettes, helps people quit smoking.
- If you find it hard to quit smoking after trying nicotine replacement therapy, prescription medications and counselling, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner to find out whether using e-cigarettes might help you quit.

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## What is vaping?

- Vaping is when you breathe in an aerosol (a vapour or mist) from a vaping device.
- The vapour is made by heating liquid mixed with different flavours, nicotine or other substances inside a vaping device. The device uses a battery to create the heat.
- Vaping devices:
  - do not create smoke like cigarettes do.
  - may be used to heat oils and dried cannabis (sometimes called marijuana, pot or weed).
  - come in many different shapes and sizes. They also have many names, like electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), e-cigarettes and vape pens.



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## Harms of vaping

The best way to protect your health from the harms of vaping is not to vape.

Vaping may cause:

- A cough that lasts a long time or does not go away.
- Trouble breathing normally, which can be serious and even life-threatening.
- Breathing in poisonous chemicals (including chemicals that can cause cancer).
- Raising your risk of heart attack and stroke if you already have heart disease.
- Injuries from explosions or fires caused by damaged vaping device batteries.
- Poisoning if the vaping liquid touches your skin or if you accidentally swallow vaping liquids.

There is not enough information on the long-term harms of vaping to know all related health effects.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner if you vape or used to vape, and have a cough, have trouble breathing, have chest pain or generally do not feel well.**



## Vaping can cause serious lung disease

- Many cases of lung disease caused by vaping have been reported in the United States and a few cases reported in Canada. Find out more from the Government of Canada’s web page, “[Vaping-Associated Lung Illness.](#)”
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has reported that many of the lung disease cases are in people who have used vaping products with a chemical found in cannabis called THC (tetrahydrocannabinol).
- There is still a lot we do not know about lung disease caused by vaping.

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## Vaping and young people

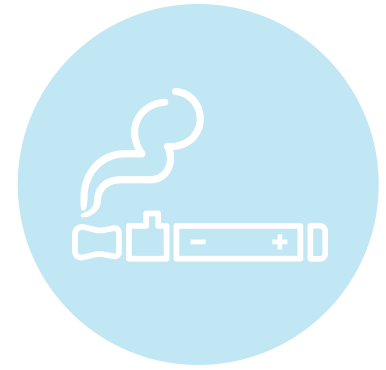
- Many young people, including teenagers, are vaping or using e-cigarettes.
- Some vaping products have a lot of nicotine and are popular with young people.
- Nicotine can harm a growing brain, making it hard for young people to pay attention and learn.
- Vaping products with nicotine can lead to addiction, which means it can be hard to quit vaping.
- Young people who vape may be more likely to try smoking cigarettes.



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## E-cigarettes and quitting smoking

- More research is needed to find out whether using e-cigarettes can help people quit smoking tobacco.
- E-cigarettes might help some people quit smoking tobacco when they could not quit using recommended options, like nicotine replacement therapy, prescription medications and counselling.
- The Government of Canada has not approved any vaping products to help people quit smoking.
- Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health. If you smoke, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner for advice on how to quit.



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## The laws and vaping

- The Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 (SFOA, 2017) does not allow vaping of any substance in enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places, as well as other designated places in Ontario.
- It is illegal to sell or supply vaping products to anyone younger than 19 years old.

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## For more information about vaping

- Government of Canada website:  
[canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/vaping.html](https://canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco/vaping.html)
- Government of Ontario website:  
[ontario.ca/page/where-you-cant-smoke-or-vape-ontario](https://ontario.ca/page/where-you-cant-smoke-or-vape-ontario)

This fact sheet was created in March 2020. Please contact the Population Health and Prevention unit, Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) at [cancerprevention@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:cancerprevention@ontariohealth.ca) if you have any feedback.

### Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to the Patient and Family Advisors and all our expert reviewers who worked on this resource.

### Disclaimer:

The information provided herein is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute or be a substitute for medical advice. This guide does not include all information about the health impacts of vaping. Do not act or rely upon this information without seeking the advice of a qualified physician or other healthcare provider. Always ask your healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

### Need this information in an accessible format?

1-855-460-2647, TTY 416-217-1815, [publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca](mailto:publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca) PCC4159



**Ontario Health**  
Cancer Care Ontario



# Cannabis

## and cancer

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### Key points to remember:

- Cannabis is not usually recommended for treating health problems. Cannabis does not treat cancer or lower the risk of getting cancer.
- There are two prescription drugs in Canada that are made up of chemicals found in cannabis called cannabinoids. In some cases, they may help with certain cancer symptoms or cancer treatment side effects when other recommended treatment options do not help.
- When smoked or vaped, cannabis may cause problems with your breathing and lungs. Cannabis can also cause heart and mental health problems.
- More research is needed to find out whether cannabis or cannabis smoke can cause cancer.
- The best way to protect your health from the harms of cannabis is not to use cannabis.

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### What is cannabis?

- Cannabis (sometimes called marijuana, pot or weed) is a type of plant.
- Cannabis can be found in many forms and is used in different ways including:
  - smoking its dried flowers, leaves, stems or seeds.
  - breathing it in from a vaporizer or a vaping device, like an e-cigarette.
  - eating or drinking it in foods or teas.
  - putting cannabis oils and capsules under the tongue or swallowing them.



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## What are cannabinoids?

- Cannabinoids are the chemicals in cannabis that affect your brain and body.
- Two well-known cannabinoids are:
  - **THC** (tetrahydrocannabinol), is a drug that changes mood and the way the brain works). THC can give you a “high” feeling that can include feeling happy for a short time. THC can cause many other feelings you may not expect or want to feel.
  - **CBD** (cannabidiol), is a drug that does not give you a “high” feeling.
- Medical cannabinoids are prescription drugs that are made from some of the chemicals found in cannabis.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about the harms and potential benefits of using cannabis for medical reasons.**

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## Can cannabis help cancer symptoms and cancer treatment side effects?

- Cannabis and cannabinoids are not recommended as the first option for treating most health problems, including cancer symptoms or cancer treatment side effects.
- If other recommended options do not work, some medical cannabinoids may help with the following cancer treatment side effects:
  - pain in people who are getting palliative care (a type of care to help someone who is sick feel more comfortable).
  - pain caused by nerve damage or other problems with the nervous system.
  - nausea (feeling like you might throw up) and throwing up caused by chemotherapy.
- There is not enough research to show whether cannabis and medical cannabinoids may help other cancer symptoms and cancer treatment side effects, like loss of appetite.



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## Harms of using cannabis

The best way to protect your health from the harms of cannabis is not to use cannabis. Using cannabis can increase your risk of the following short-term and long-term harms.

### Short-term harms:

- Mental health problems, like feeling anxious or paranoid (for example, thinking that people are trying to hurt you, even though they are not).
- Higher heart rate (heart beating faster) than normal.
- Slower thoughts (trouble concentrating), body movement, and reactions to things happening to you and around you, which means you may not be able to drive and use other machines safely.

### Long-term harms (harms that develop over time with regular use over weeks, months or years):

- Trouble breathing normally and a cough that lasts a long time or does not go away (if cannabis is smoked or vaped).
- Mental health problems, like schizophrenia and psychoses, which are mental illnesses that cause someone to lose touch with reality. You may be more likely to get these mental illnesses if you start to use cannabis before age 25.
- Addiction to using cannabis (feeling like you cannot stop using cannabis).
- Throwing up regularly.

To learn more about the harms of using cannabis, go to the Government of Ontario's web page, "[Health effects of cannabis.](#)"



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## The laws and cannabis

- It is legal (allowed by law) in Ontario for people age 19 and older to buy and use cannabis from a licensed provider.
- It is not legal to drive under the influence of cannabis.
- It is not legal to take cannabis across the Canadian border.

### Medical cannabis:

- The Government of Canada has a system for people who use cannabis for treating certain health problems. To learn more, go to the Government of Canada's web page, "[Accessing cannabis for medical purposes.](#)"
- You will need a medical document, like a prescription, from your doctor or nurse practitioner to get medical cannabis.

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## For more information about cannabis and cancer

- Government of Ontario website: [ontario.ca/page/cannabis](https://ontario.ca/page/cannabis)
- Government of Canada website: [canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis.html](https://canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis.html)
- Canadian Cancer Society website: [cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/diagnosis-and-treatment/complementary-therapies/medical-cannabis-and-cannabinoids](https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/diagnosis-and-treatment/complementary-therapies/medical-cannabis-and-cannabinoids)
- Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines: [camh.ca/-/media/files/lrcug\\_professional-pdf](https://camh.ca/-/media/files/lrcug_professional-pdf)

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