

# Op-ed: Stop using tobacco products and be 'lung healthy' at home

April 28 2020, by Ellen Hahn and Chizimuzo T.c. Okoli

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The novel coronavirus attacks our airways, making it difficult to breathe. It is particularly important to take special care of our lungs during the pandemic and beyond. Caring for our lungs can help us better avoid and fight this infection.

Most Kentuckians have heeded the pleas by our Governor to practice social distancing, wash our hands, disinfect surfaces, and 'stay healthy at [home](#)." All these activities help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. What else can we do to prevent getting and spreading this dangerous illness?

We stay 'lung healthy' at home by avoiding breathing [tobacco](#) smoke and [aerosol](#), such as from [vaping](#) products, in and around our homes and cars.

Tobacco smoke and aerosol contain [tiny particles](#) that get trapped in the lungs, hurting our ability to fight off infection. Exposure to these particles happens in two ways: breathing in sidestream and mainstream smoke or aerosol. The smoke that is released from lighting or puffing on a tobacco or vaping product is called sidestream smoke or aerosol. Mainstream smoke or aerosol is what a user inhales and then exhales into the air around them. It is possible that the virus can attach to the smoke or aerosol particles when breathing in and exhaling into the surrounding air, spreading the virus. It is really important to avoid breathing both sidestream and mainstream smoke and aerosol to stay 'lung healthy at home' and fight off infection.

If someone in your home smokes, uses [electronic cigarettes](#), or vapes, there are ways to avoid exposing them and others to tobacco smoke or aerosol. Keep the air clean in your home by [smoking](#) or vaping at least 20 feet away from entryways, windows, and vents. Avoid using tobacco and vaping in the car as the smoke and aerosol can be very concentrated in this small space, even with the windows open. Consider that [older adults](#), young children and those who already have breathing problems like asthma or emphysema are at greatest risk for breathing problems from smoke and aerosol exposure. Avoiding using tobacco and electronic cigarettes inside your home and car will help everyone stay 'lung healthy at home.'

The coronavirus pandemic provides a perfect opportunity to stop using tobacco or vaping products. We have noticed during this crisis that many Kentuckians including tobacco users want to keep their lungs healthy. There is no better time than now! Check out free help from [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov) where you can sign up to receive text messages to quit. Call the free telephone call line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). There is a free mobile phone program to stop vaping: text DITCHJUUL to 88709.

Staying healthy at home is the best way to prevent getting or spreading the new coronavirus. Let's stay 'lung healthy' at home by avoiding tobacco smoke and aerosol for ourselves and those we love. Caring for our lungs is especially crucial now as our airways and lungs are directly impacted by what we breathe. Since [tobacco smoke](#) and aerosol impair our ability to fight infection, what better way to prevent getting or spreading the virus by staying 'lung healthy' at home?

Provided by University of Kentucky

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