

# Smokers and vapers at greater risk of dying from coronavirus – as experts warn we could face Italy-style epidemic

**S** [thesun.co.uk/news/11157141/smokers-vapers-risk-dying-coronavirus-italy-epidemic](https://thesun.co.uk/news/11157141/smokers-vapers-risk-dying-coronavirus-italy-epidemic)

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SMOKERS are at a greater risk of dying from coronavirus - and Brits could face an Italy-style epidemic, experts have warned.

The habit weakens the function of the lungs and could leave people more susceptible to the deadly bug.

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An old man wears a mask and smokes in Wuhan, China, where the coronavirus outbreak startedCredit: Getty Images - Getty

It comes as health officials revealed an otherwise "healthy" 22-year-old e-cigarette user from Brooklyn, New York, tested positive for Covid-19.

Doctors have previously warned that vaping can cause inflammation of the lungs, which makes it harder to fight off infections.

Last year, the US saw an outbreak of lung injuries linked to vaping known as e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).

According to the latest figures from the [CDC](#), a total of 2,807 hospitalized cases of EVALI, and 68 deaths reported nationwide.

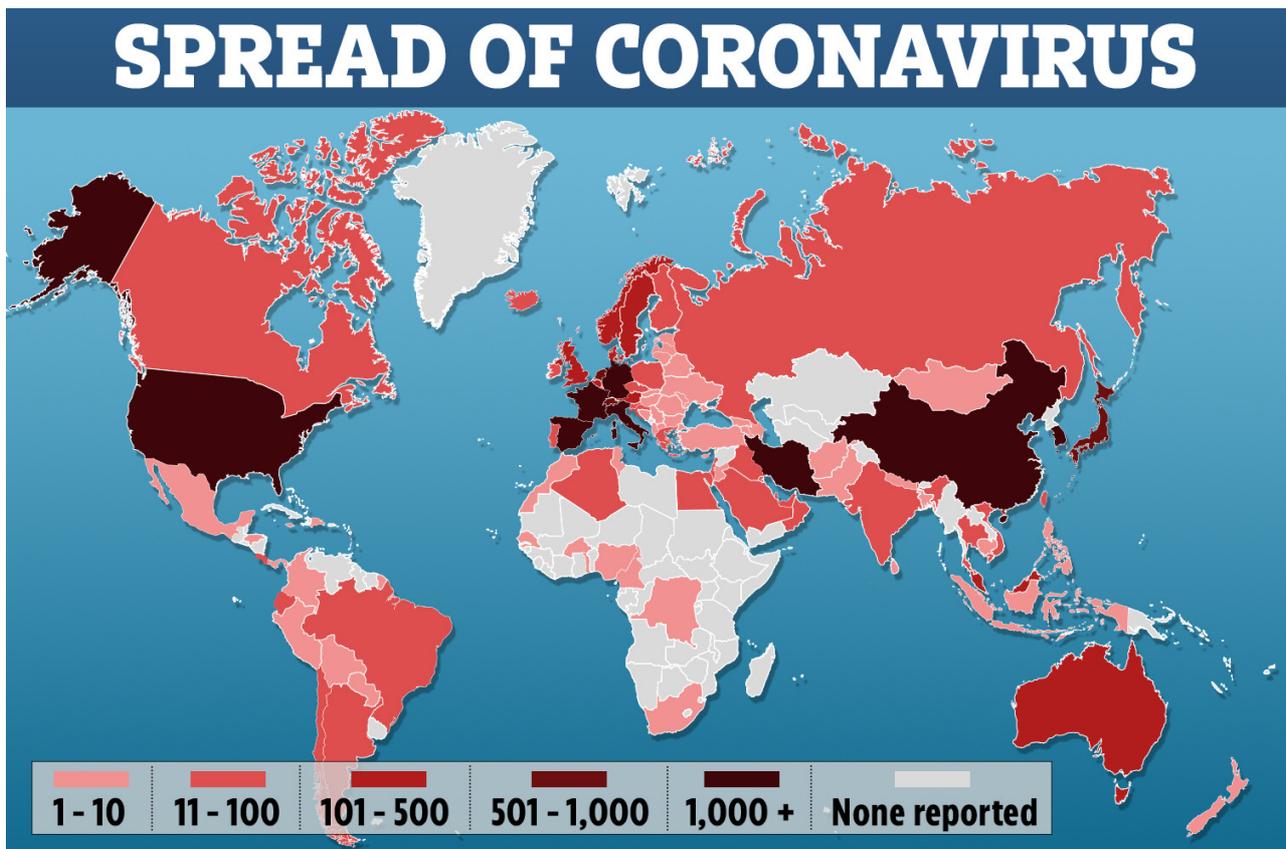
## Vaping risk

Mayor Bill de Blasio warned the vaping could make younger people more vulnerable to suffering complications if they are infected by coronavirus.

He said: "If you are a smoker or a vaper that does make you more vulnerable.

"If you are a smoker or a vaper this is a very good time to stop that habit and we will help you."

Meanwhile, scientists have long warned that smoking tobacco can increase the risk of contracting bacterial and viral infections.



While there is no direct link between smoking and Covid-19 as yet, health officials have advised people this is the time to quit.

Deborah Arnott Chief Executive of public health charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) said: "Smokers are more likely to get respiratory infections and twice as likely to develop pneumonia than non-smokers.

"Quitting smoking is good for your health in so many ways and smokers should see coronavirus as further motivation to give quitting a go to build up their bodies' defences now before coronavirus becomes widespread in the UK."

She added: "Those in the NHS working with patients who smoke should see it as a priority to advise them to stop.

"Particularly among groups that are already highly vulnerable to respiratory infections such as those with COPD, and known to have very high rates of smoking which particularly includes those with mental health conditions."

## Stop smoking

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And Britain's top doc, Professor Chris Whitty agreed.

He told MPs on the Health and Social Care Committee: "To be clear on smokers, my recommendation is that they stop smoking.

"If you are going to give up smoking, this is a very good moment to do it.



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*Prof Chris Whitty chief medical officer*

"But it is not that I'm saying they should self-isolate or behave in any way differently.

"I'm just highlighting that as an additional vulnerability for people who are otherwise healthy."

Professor Robert Dingwall, a public health expert at Nottingham Trent University, told The Sun Online: "There is certainly a respectable body of medical opinion that thinks serious outcomes are more likely among heavy smokers.



# TOTAL INFECTED

# 460



"Basically any previous lung damage increases that risk."

"If you are an ex-miner with pneumoconiosis and a smoker you should definitely be concerned."

He added that it's unlikely to affect the chances of getting the disease, but it could lead to more serious complications if you did contract it.



Serious outcomes are more likely among heavy smokers

*Professor Robert Dingwall public health expert*

Professor Sanjaya Senanayake, from the Australian National University (ANU), said while no direct link had been established, smoking increased other conditions that do make Covid-19 worse.

He told [Daily Mail Australia](#): "Smoking is associated with other illnesses such as chronic lung and chronic heart diseases which are associated with more severe disease and worse outcomes from coronavirus."

Dr Senanayake pointed out that while a link hadn't yet been established, it doesn't mean there wouldn't be one in future.

"It's always a good time to quit smoking," he added.

The first two patients to die at Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan, [detailed in the Lancet Medical journal](#), were both long-term smokers.

Researchers from China and the US carried out analysis of the first 8,000 cases of coronavirus.

They found that men were more likely to be diagnosed with the disease and suffer severe symptoms, including pneumonia.

## Survival rates

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Their findings also revealed that the survival rates between males and females were markedly different.

In the first six weeks of the outbreak 1.7 per cent of women died compared with 2.8 per cent of men.

Experts believe there are a few reasons for this discrepancy, including some biological and other lifestyle choices, such as smoking.

Men are much more likely to smoke than women in China, which has the largest population of smokers in the world - accounting for nearly a third of the world's smokers.

But just two per cent of them are women.

<b>HAVE I GOT A COLD, FLU OR COVID-19?</b>			
<b>SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>CORONAVIRUS</b>	<b>COLD</b>	<b>FLU</b>
 <b>FEVER</b>	Common	Rare	Common
 <b>FATIGUE</b>	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 <b>COUGH</b>	Common (usually dry)	Mild	Common (usually dry)
 <b>SNEEZING</b>	No	Common	No
 <b>ACHES &amp; PAINS</b>	Sometimes	Common	Common
 <b>RUNNY OR STUFFY NOSE</b>	Rare	Common	Sometimes
 <b>SORE THROAT</b>	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 <b>DIARRHOEA</b>	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 <b>HEADACHES</b>	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 <b>SHORTNESS OF BREATH</b>	Sometimes	No	No

In Italy, the worst-hit country in Europe - where 827 people have died - 23.7 per cent of adults admitted they smoke.

That's about 11.6 million people across the country with men aged between 25 and 44 years old accounting for most of that.

In the UK, 14.7 per cent of people aged over 18 - or 7.2 million people in the population - reported being a smoker.

Of those 16.5 per cent were men - around 3.9 million - and 13 per cent women - around 3.2 million.

The study also showed that being an older male is another coronavirus risk, with almost 10 per cent of infected men over the age of 60 succumbing to the disease.

Men were also disproportionately affected during the SARS and MERS outbreaks - which were caused by similar coronaviruses.

More women were infected by SARS in Hong Kong in 2003, but the death rate was 50 per cent higher, according to a study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome killed 32 percent of men infected compared with 25.8 per cent of women.

Meanwhile, a doctor has today warned that the UK is on the same trajectory as Italy.

Dr Hilary Jones told Good Morning Britain: "Well I think this was predictable.

Expert says 60 PER CENT of Brits must catch deadly virus to build immunity

What F1 races have been cancelled due to coronavirus and when does season start?

Bahrain and Vietnam F1 Grands Prix officially CANCELLED due to coronavirus

100,000 infected in Ohio and cases could DOUBLE every six days, virus chief fears

"We were always running containment and delay concurrently in reality, we always knew numbers were going to increase probably double every three to four days.

"We are on the same trajectory as Italy, if you look at the Italian situation overnight two hundred deaths nearly, so clearly this is very serious.

"Having said that the delay phase is critical, people need to socially distance, we should have banned these mass gatherings probably a week ago."

Britain 'on the same coronavirus trajectory as Italy', warns GMB's Dr Hilary