

SMOKERS, VAPERS MORE AT RISK FOR COVID-19: MEDICAL OFFICER

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Those who smoke and vape are at higher risk of contracting coronavirus, cautions Halton's top doctor.

Details on how tobacco, vaping products and water pipe use can make people more susceptible to COVID-19 were outlined in a recent memo to regional council from Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Hamidah Meghani.

"When tobacco smoke or vaping product aerosol is inhaled, chemicals damage the lungs and weaken the immune response," she said. "This can allow viruses such as COVID-19 to enter the lungs more easily, and increases the chance of contracting respiratory infections. In addition, smoking and vaping involve frequent contact between fingers and lips, which can further increase the risk of

contracting COVID-19."

The risk of transmitting the virus is also higher among people who smoke and vape, Meghani noted.

"In many cases, tobacco, vaping product and water pipe use involves the sharing of products and mouthpieces within groups," she said. "This sharing can facilitate the transmission of COVID-19 between individuals."

People with a history of tobacco use who contract coronavirus are more likely to experience severe symptoms and illness, added Meghani.

She explained available research suggests mortality rates are higher for those individuals when hospitalized with the disease, compared with nontobacco users.

"Exposure to second-hand smoke can also increase the risk of developing more serious symptoms of COVID-19 due to the damage caused to the heart and lungs by the exposure," she said.

While some media outlets elsewhere in the world have published claims that tobacco and/or nicotine use can reduce the risk of COVID-19, Meghani said there's currently no scientific evidence to back this up.

The medical officer of health's information will now be shared with local health-care providers and the Youth Vaping Roundtable, which will host its next meeting on June 24.

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