

Smoking, Vaping & COVID-19 – Increased Access to Quitting Supports

Information for Health Professionals

Research suggests that quitting smoking, even temporarily, can have positive outcomes in preventing and reducing serious illness from COVID-19. COVID-19 is an infection that mainly affects the lungs. Smoking increases the risk of serious illness from any lung infection. Quitting smoking can improve lung and heart health almost right away, even after years of smoking.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risks related to transmission and disease progression among people who smoke or vape, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services are providing increased access to quitting supports for Albertans:

Alberta Human Services Drug Benefit Supplement

Temporary changes to coverage for Nicotine Products under the Alberta Human Services Drug Benefit Supplement (AISH, Learner Support, Income Support, Adult Health). The cap on this benefit has increased from \$500 to \$1000. More information can be found at

<https://www.albertaquits.ca/quitting/medications/provincial-coverage-plans-for-medications>

Virtual QuitCore

A Virtual adaptation of our in person QuitCore groups will be piloted using a secure Zoom platform starting in May. We have three pilot groups scheduled which will be filled from our existing QuitCore wait list. Once the pilot review is completed in June we will work with our Facilitator partners to scale up availability of Virtual QuitCore with open registration for interested individuals.

ABQuits COVID

Clients participating in AlbertaQuits HelpLine counselling will have temporary access to quitting medications cards (through BlueCross) for up to \$500 to purchase NRT, Zyban, or Champix. You can refer clients to the HelpLine using an AlbertaQuits HelpLine Referral Form. Pads of these forms can be ordered here <https://healthcareproviders.albertaquits.ca/resources/online-ordering>. Please note: this enhancement is offered as part of a comprehensive program - medication coupled with counselling – therefore clients will only be eligible for the enhancement if they are enrolled in counselling with the AlbertaQuits HelpLine.

Questions about these programs can be emailed to TRU@ahs.ca.

The following resources are available at <https://healthcareproviders.albertaquits.ca/resources> to support discussions with clients/patients about smoking, vaping and COVID-19:

- Smoking, Vaping and COVID-19 Evidence Summary
- Clinical Support Primer
- Smoking, Vaping and COVID-19 FAQ

(please check regularly for updated versions of these documents)

Thank you for supporting access to quitting medications for your clients during this challenging time!

