

New York State Academy of Family Physicians

260 Osborne Road • Albany, NY 12211 • 518.489.8945 • 800.822.0700 • Fax: 518.489.8961

E-mail: fp@nysafp.org • Home page: <http://www.nysafp.org>



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Contact: Vito F. Grasso, MPA

Executive Vice President

(518) 489-8945/ vito@nysafp.org

Statement by NYSAFP on Link Between Tobacco Use and COVID-19 Call for a Ban on the Sale of All Tobacco/Vaping Products During Pandemic Period

**Barbara Keber, MD
President**

“As our State and Country struggle to respond to the rapidly evolving and escalating COVID-19 pandemic affecting our residents and straining our healthcare system, mounting evidence demonstrates the link between tobacco use and increased risk for progressive COVID-19. NYSAFP calls for an immediate ban on the sale of all tobacco and vaping/e-cigarette products by Executive Order to protect New Yorkers and lessen the impact and progression of this serious virus on those who contract it.”

“A recently published study (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32118640/>) compared COVID-19 patients with disease progression to those who’s health improved or were stabilized. The study found that the progression group had a significantly higher proportion of patients with a history of smoking/tobacco use than the improvement/stabilization group, suggesting **patients who use tobacco are 14 times as likely to have COVID-19 progression** requiring more extensive treatment and hospitalization than those who do not. Additionally, people with COVID-19 are highly contagious and with sustained progression continue to infect others. The increased risk is an alarming finding which must be immediately addressed in our COVID-19 response.”

“The American Academy of Family Physicians recently developed guidance stating that people who smoke or use vapes or e-cigarettes have a significantly higher risk of contracting respiratory infections like coronavirus. People with decreased lung function caused by smoking or vaping are more likely to develop serious complications caused by infections.”

“Now more than ever, it is critical for the State and medical community to take actions to prevent our youth from ever using these highly addictive, deadly products and to help our patients to reduce their risks through FDA-approved cessation and telehealth during this pandemic.”

“NYSAFP has been an active supporter of legislation to end the sale of all flavored tobacco including flavored e-cigarettes given that nearly one in three high schoolers are now using a flavored vape product in New York. This proposal must be enacted immediately in the final budget being negotiated. Further, given the clear evidence of elevated risk of COVID-19 and tobacco use, NYSAFP calls for a ban on the sale of all tobacco/vaping products during the pandemic period. Bold, swift actions must be taken to protect our residents and we must follow the science which supports our call for a ban.”

The NYSAFP is the New York chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. NYSAFP represents more than 6,000 family physicians and medical students throughout the state and provides advocacy, education and information for its members. For more information, please visit www.nysafp.org.