

## Hong Kong study finds that smoking increases risk of COVID-19

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**Discovered a causal link between smoking and a higher risk of contracting mild to severe COVID-19**

Researchers from the School of Public Health, LKS Faculty of Medicine of The University of Hong Kong (HKUMed), in collaboration with The Chinese University of Hong Kong's (CUHK) Faculty of Medicine (CU Medicine), discovered a causal link between smoking and a higher risk of contracting mild to severe COVID-19, using data from large scale genome-wide association studies.

This is one of the first and largest studies to explore the role of smoking in different severities of COVID-19 using Mendelian randomisation, and it also implies smoking cessation services could be considered to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the community.

Previous observational studies showed mixed results concerning smoking and COVID-19 risk, possibly driven by confounding factors arising from lifestyle, such as obesity, or biases by design which are difficult to account for in observational studies. Although more recent studies, including genetic studies have indicated a possible link between smoking and severe COVID-19 risk, the association between smoking and milder forms of COVID-19, which account for the majority of COVID-19 cases, remains unclear. Understanding the role of smoking in COVID-19 risk is particularly important given smoking cessation services are readily available in Hong Kong and could play a role in reducing COVID-19 cases in the community.