

# BREATHING *matters*

A PUBLICATION OF BREATHE NEW HAMPSHIRE | SUMMER 2020

## PERSPECTIVES DURING A PANDEMIC: LUNG DISEASE IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Since the COVID-19 outbreak nearly shutdown New Hampshire and most of the U.S. in mid-March, we thought it was important to hear from those affected by this: people living with lung disease and healthcare professionals. We asked the individuals featured below for their perspectives:



**Cristin:**  
Mom of Ulysses, a preschooler living with asthma.



**Albee Budnits, MD:**  
Breathe NH Board Member and retired Critical Care



**Lorna Marshall, RRT:**  
Pulmonary Rehabilitation Supervisor at Catholic Medical Center



**Louise Hobden:**  
Breathe NH Board Member and person living with COPD



**Dorene Garnsey:**  
Individual living with COPD



**Marguerite Girard:**  
Individual living with COPD and Lung Cancer

*Note: Some last names were not used to protect privacy*

### **How has your life changed due to COVID-19?**

**Marguerite:** Terror. When the Governor issued the stay-at-home order I knew this was serious. Last year, I was in the hospital with the flu, pneumonia and sepsis. I have to be very careful. I live in an in-law apartment in my daughter and son-in-law's home. He's an essential worker. I stopped having dinner with them.

**Lorna:** I now work from home and my hours were reduced to 20 hours. Many colleagues were furloughed and it's difficult not having interactions with them and not seeing patients in person.

**Louise:** Staying home for more than two months. Have not left my house at all.

**Cristin:** I think the common thread for everyone is being home all of the time and trying to juggle work, home schooling, and being a full-time parent; it is a lot of hats to wear at once. What has been particularly challenging for me is being the sole parent in the age of COVID-19. I cannot go anywhere without my child and his asthma, combined with allergy season (another thing to trigger his breathing) is daunting when you add the COVID-19 layer to it. We are together 24/7 and our excursions into nature for walks and hikes are about all we have - thank goodness for maintenance medication and antihistamines.

### **What has been your greatest challenge?**

**Albee:** The uncertainty and isolation have been the greatest challenge. Actually not getting depressed by the 24/7 news coverage, especially the dichotomy between our "national approach" and actual science; although without looking too hard, I feel there's more good going on than that depicted by the news.

**Dorene:** Trying to exercise and stay positive. Can't go out and do my shopping - it's already hard to breathe so wearing a mask is not an option. My daughter has to run my errands for me. I don't like having to depend on others for help.

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## STAYING SAFE WHILE NH REOPENS

As New Hampshire begins to reopen, it is important to take the necessary precautions to protect yourself and others while leaving home:

- Wear a face mask or cloth face covering in public places such as the grocery store, pharmacy, or hospital
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces daily
    - Try to maintain 6 feet of social distance between others

The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to minimize contact with others by avoiding heavily populated public places in the community and maintaining the social distance standard of 6 feet.

For more information please visit [BreatheNH.org](https://www.breatheNH.org)

**Lorna:** I'm a people person. I went into healthcare to help people. I enjoy making connections and helping my patients. It's not the same taking care of them over the telephone.

**Cristin:** Trying to explain to a 5 year old why he can't go to school or see friends. How do you tell a child that they could get sicker than the average person without scaring them to no end? I read the stories about what it is like to have COVID and be hospitalized and I think of him alone; conversely, I think of me getting it and what would happen to him? His grandparents are my go-to but they're in high risk categories and couldn't take him. It is a thought that can keep me up all night if I think too hard.

### ***What positive changes have come about as a result of this?***

**Louise:** More time with my husband. More FaceTime with my grandchildren. Normally, everyone is so busy. We had a family birthday party on Zoom for my twin grandchildren's 2nd birthday. My yoga class is now held on Zoom and I participate in an online Pulmonary Rehab class. So, still doing the things I enjoy; just differently now.

**Marguerite:** I've been cooking for myself.

**Lorna:** Finding new ways to stay connected and support my patients. I've reached out to patients via telephone and email trying to answer questions, whether it be about medications or reviewing the education from class. Focusing on the patients and letting them know I'm here and can still help them.

### ***What are you most looking forward to?***

**Dorene:** Having freedom to get back out. I miss my Pulmonary Rehabilitation classes. I have done some social distance visits with a friend in my backyard, but it's not the same.

**Louise:** Going out to dinner and trivia with my husband. We used to go out twice per week. But, we probably won't be going anywhere soon. It's not worth the risk.

**Marguerite:** Getting back out; I miss seeing my friends. It will be a long time before I eat at a restaurant; maybe not until next year depending on how things go. I was looking forward to my granddaughter's wedding this fall in Georgia. But, that could be up in the air. It's sad to see people missing big milestones (graduations, weddings).

### ***What is your advice for others living with lung disease or respiratory issues, especially as the state continues to reopen?***

**Cristin:** You're not alone. Do your research too - early findings seem to indicate asthma is less of a risk of death with COVID and that allergy-induced asthma may actually be an indicator that you're less likely to get the virus. It isn't as scary as our brains may lead us to believe - though that doesn't mean I'm treating it as anything other than scary, when it comes to my behaviors - it just gives me a little peace of mind.

**Louise:** Don't rush out when things reopen. Do your due diligence to stay healthy and safe. Don't watch the news too much and take care of yourself. I look forward to a vaccine.

**Albee:** The most important "to-do's" are hand washing/no face touching (admittedly that's the hard one); the 6 foot social distancing, wearing masks to primarily protect others, but helps with remembering not to touch your face; and be cognizant of any respiratory changes/symptoms and if so then discuss with your health care professional. All medicine has uncertainties; it's part of the deal, but makes it hard to cope and makes for constant changes.

**Lorna:** Continue to proceed with caution. Be mindful to protect ourselves from exposure. Remember the basics you learned as a child: wash your hands, cover your cough, take shoes off at the door, eat well, get enough sleep and be kind. ○



## **COVID-19 AND TOBACCO:**

### ***What you need to know***

Smoking and vaping can damage the lungs and weaken the body's immune system. If you smoke or vape and get the COVID-19 virus, you increase your risk of developing more severe symptoms. COVID-19 attacks the lungs, and people who smoke are at a higher risk of developing lung infections along with older adults over the age of 65, individuals with compromised immune systems and individuals who have underlying medical conditions such as lung disease, hypertension, heart disease or diabetes are at high risk.

Your lungs work better when you stop smoking or vaping. It is clear that vaping may increase nicotine addiction, is strongly associated with acute lung injury, and potentially causes cancer down the road. It's a great time to quit and a terrible time to start.

**Quit Now New Hampshire:**  
1-800-QUIT-NOW or [quitnownh.org](http://quitnownh.org)

**My Life My Quit™:** Teens can enroll by texting  
855-891-9989 or online at [MyLifeMyQuit.com](http://MyLifeMyQuit.com)



# VAPING UNVEILED™ GOES VIRTUAL

Breathe New Hampshire is pleased to offer our Vaping Unveiled™ program virtually. As schools and businesses continue to operate remotely, vaping amongst youth and teens remains a very prevalent public health concern. The recently released 2019 New Hampshire Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results indicated that the percentage of high school students who have used an electronic vapor product in the last 30 days increased by 10% from 23.8% in 2017 to 33.8% in 2019. Likewise, the percentage of high school students who have ever used an electronic vapor product increased from 41.1% to 49.8% (2019 NH YRBS.) These results emphasize that the need for vaping and teen nicotine addiction prevention programs has never been greater.

Our condensed virtual program is inclusive of the latest information surrounding teen vaping in New Hampshire in addition to how e-cigarette use can affect susceptibility to respiratory viruses such as COVID-19. During these unprecedented times, protecting youth and teens from the effects of nicotine addiction and potential lung disease remains our priority.

We are excited to continue offering our virtual program to the NH community through the summer.



More information can be found on our website, or email [ssstone@BreatheNH.org](mailto:ssstone@BreatheNH.org).

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

*In mid-March, due to COVID-19, the NH General Court suspended all legislative activities. Committee work on some bills continued remotely. The NH House of Representatives is set to resume their legislative session in June, meeting at the Whittemore Center Arena at the University of New Hampshire. This will be a historic event as it will be only the second time in the history of the House of Representatives that they will meet outside of Representatives Hall.*

*The General Court will be addressing a modified list of bills in the completion of this year's session. Among legislation that Breathe New Hampshire is monitoring:*

- SB 248 – increasing the age for sales and possession of tobacco products.
- HB 1662 - relative to the purchase, use, and possession of tobacco products and e-cigarettes.

***For more information on Breathe NH advocacy please contact Kim at: [kcoronis@BreatheNH.org](mailto:kcoronis@BreatheNH.org)***



## DID YOU KNOW?

The stimulus package, known as the Cares Act, allows taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions to take a one-time deduction of up to \$300 (\$600 for married couples) for gifts made to charitable organizations.

Despite the changing landscape of respiratory illnesses, our mission has not wavered and education will always be the best defense against new and existing lung health concerns.

***Make a gift today by visiting [BreatheNH.org/donate](https://BreatheNH.org/donate). We appreciate your support!***

### Give a gift that costs nothing during your lifetime

Please consider placing Breathe New Hampshire in your will as a thoughtful and meaningful way to help ensure that we continue our critical mission of eliminating lung disease. Contact us at 603-669-2411.

## FUN PASS:

As the weather warms we naturally think about summer plans and local adventures. While these are unprecedented times we are encouraged that some things are available to us once again.

We are offering a discount on our Fun Pass book and hope that you will consider supporting Breathe NH and local New England attractions that are open by purchasing a book. The Fun Pass is available for \$25 all summer long! As a local non-profit we too have been affected and we want to do our part to help.

Don't forget to send your favorite photos and share your adventures with us. Make sure to include #passthefun and email us at [photos@breathenh.org](mailto:photos@breathenh.org)

*Breathe New Hampshire is not responsible for venue closings or restrictions due to Covid-19. Please check with any participating attractions about changes to their 2020 schedules.*

## DISCOUNTED ALL SUMMER

### NOW \$25

Gift Certificates are also available, show your support now and receive a book when you are ready!



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## CANCELED EVENTS: GOLF & CRUISE

It is with a heavy heart that we've made the official decision to cancel our 2020 Eager Breather's Cruise and Golf Tournament. After careful consideration and many conversations with local health experts, we recognize the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and participants are our greatest priority. With all the recommendations for social distancing and restrictions to group gatherings and the unpredictability for the future we feel there is no other choice.

We recognize this is a great loss for many who have come to rely on these events as a time to socialize with others who are equally passionate about lung health. We too treasure these moments and are feeling the loss.

We look towards better times to come where we can laugh, dance and celebrate with you.



A Concord man out walking his dog around his neighborhood downtown this spring noticed all of the cigarette litter on the ground. This past April, he collected nearly two bags of cigarette butts that were sent to Breathe New Hampshire and then onto TerraCycle®, where they will be recycled. Cigarettes are the most littered item on Earth. Looking for a family activity to get out of the house? Breathe NH has toolkits readily available to help you clean up your local neighborhood. Contact us at info@BreatheNH.org

