

# Health experts look to '90s anti-smoking campaign as way to warn about COVID-19 dangers

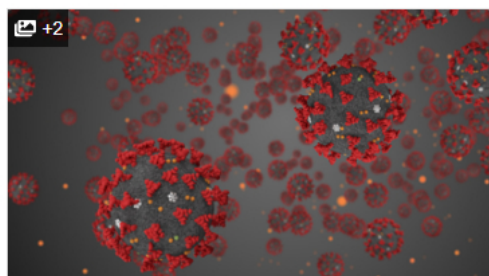
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**PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) --** Health experts say the number of COVID-19 cases is just going to rise as the weeks progress, due to holiday gatherings and travel.

The surge is prompting one major medical institution in the Valley to rethink the way they're getting people to take the dangers of COVID-19 seriously. Some say just telling people to "wear a mask" and "social distance" isn't having the same effect it used to.



Arizona is reporting 1,335 new coronavirus cases and five additional deaths today

The Arizona Department of Health Services reported 1,335 new coronavirus cases Sunday morning. Arizona's statewide total is now at 826,454 cases.

In the 1990s, public health campaigns (like one from the Arizona Department of Health Services) clearly stated how smoking negatively affected your lungs.

When those campaigns launched, at first, many people didn't take it seriously, saying, "Oh, that can't be possible," and "That won't affect me; that will affect someone else," said Beth Smith, Senior Director at UArizona College of Medicine.

In fact, the turning point in the anti-smoking movement didn't come until ads started showing smokers' lungs. Those graphic images finally helped turn the tide of public opinion and create victories in the war against tobacco.

So now, medical experts say the recent massive spike in COVID-19 cases is making them pivot in their approach when it comes to educating people about coronavirus dangers.

Smith says, in order to save lives, they need to change the perception that COVID-19 isn't that deadly. Other health officials in the Valley agree.

Dr. Ross Goldberg, president of the Arizona Medical Association, believes visual aids may be the only way to stop people from gathering in groups. "We can go lots of different directions; things you don't want to show that are pretty dramatic," said Dr. Goldberg.

The idea is gaining momentum. Brittany Bankhead-Kendall, an ER doctor from Texas, [tweeted](#): "I don't know who needs to hear this but "post Covid" Lungs look worse than any type of terrible smoker's lungs we've ever seen. And they collapse. And they clot off. And the shortness of breath lingers on... & on... & on."

Officials at the UArizona College of Medicine said they're still in the beginning stages of pivoting their message, until the vaccine becomes widely accessible.

Meantime, for Dr. Goldberg, knowing is half the battle. "They can accuse us of being overly dramatic about it, even though we are trying to tell the truth because they can't see it," said Goldberg.