

# P R E S S R E L E A S E

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## Public Health reports vaping-associated pulmonary injuries in Ventura County

OXNARD, Calif. – Ventura County public health officials are reporting two Ventura County residents as suspected of having vaping-associated pulmonary injuries. The cases were reported to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). CDPH is currently investigating whether these two cases meet their case definition. As of today, CDPH has identified 37 cases of acute lung disease among people with a recent history of vaping, some of whom vaped unlicensed or unregulated cannabis products.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is investigating vaping as a possible cause of progressive and often severe respiratory distress, sometimes first diagnosed as pneumonia or bronchitis. These cases may be accompanied by fever and gastrointestinal symptoms. All of the cases failed to respond to an initial course of antibiotic treatment. Patients have required admission to the hospital needing respiratory support, including oxygen and even intubation with mechanical ventilation. Most patients have improved with steroids although some have not regained completely normal lung function. Evaluation for infectious causes has been negative to date in all patients. One patient in Illinois has died.

“I’m concerned that vaping is a gateway to cigarette smoking, that it carries a risk of causing lung cancer and that there are unknown risks associated with all the different flavorants and other uncontrolled substances in the vaped material,” said Dr. Robert Levin, Health Officer for Ventura County. “If this association between vaping and severe pulmonary injuries bears out, it will be another and unexpected grave side effect.”

Vaping refers to the increasingly popular practice of inhaling vapor from an e-cigarette device, which works by heating a liquid that can contain nicotine, marijuana, or other drugs. The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown. The liquids used in e-cigarettes are largely unregulated, and they can contain toxic chemicals that can cause lung damage. The common perception that vaping is safe or safer than smoking has been open to question with health authorities expressing increasing concerns about its dangers.

All patients being investigated for severe pulmonary injuries by the CDC reported vaping in the weeks prior to hospital admission, and a reported common exposure between these patients is that they had been vaping either nicotine, cannabis or CBD oils. No one specific brand name of vaping product has been implicated.

Twenty-two cases were first reported in four states on August 15, 2019. Six days later, on August 21, 153 cases were reported in 16 states. As of the end of last week, the CDC reported 193 cases in 22 states of severe pulmonary injuries that it believed was caused by vaping. This week the CDC reported that there are over 200 cases nationwide.

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