

## Alaska Public Health Alert

### Report Possible Cases of Vaping-Associated Pulmonary Illness to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology

August 28, 2019

#### Summary

Between June 28 and August 20, 2019, 193 potential cases of vaping-associated pulmonary illness have been reported from a total of 22 states. One individual in Illinois who vaped and developed severe respiratory disease has died. At this time, no cases have been reported from Alaska. State and federal public health agencies are working to understand the causes, risk factors, and extent of illness associated with vaping. The purpose of this Health Alert Network message is to provide Alaska clinicians with information about this multistate investigation.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Clinical Action message from August 16, 2019 (available at: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/newsletters/coca/081619.htm>) provided the following information for clinicians about the cases:

- Presenting symptoms included cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue.
- Symptoms worsened over a period of days or weeks before admission to the hospital.
- Other symptoms reported by some patients included fever, chest pain, weight loss, nausea, and diarrhea.
- Chest radiographs showed bilateral opacities, and CT imaging of the chest demonstrated diffuse ground-glass opacities, often with sub-pleural sparing.
- Evaluation for infectious etiologies was negative among nearly all patients.
- Some patients experienced progressive respiratory compromise requiring mechanical ventilation but subsequently improved with corticosteroids.
- **All patients reported “vaping” (i.e., use of e-cigarette devices to aerosolize substances for inhalation) in the weeks and months prior to hospital admission.** Many have acknowledged recent use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products during interviews; however, no specific product or device has been identified by all cases, nor has any product or device been conclusively linked to this clinical syndrome.

#### What Alaska Health Care Providers Should Do

- **Report cases of respiratory illness of unclear etiology among persons who report recent inhalation drug use to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology at (907) 269-8000 or 800-478-0084 (after hours).**
- Contact Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) with questions about the clinical management of patients with illnesses potentially related to drug use.
- Discuss the dangers of vaping with patients and parents as appropriate.

#### Additional sources of information about this evolving situation:

- Wisconsin Department of Health Services: Severe Lung Disease Among People who Reported Vaping, available at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>
- Illinois Department of Public Health: E-Cigarettes and Vapes. Available at: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/tobacco/e-cigarettes-and-vapes>

## Vaping Education and Prevention Resources

The Alaska Division of Public Health Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, with the help from many partners, supports tobacco prevention programs that include addressing the rising use of e-cigarettes among youth. Following are some educational resources on vaping:

- Alaska Division of Public Health, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion E-cigarettes: Not Harmless. Not Healthy: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Tobacco/TobaccoFreeAlaska/ecigs.aspx#resources>
- Not Buying It Facebook page (addresses e-cig and tobacco use): <https://www.facebook.com/notbuyingit.alaska>
- CDC: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)
- FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/vaporizers-e-cigarettes-and-other-electronic-nicotine-delivery-systems-ends>
- U.S. Surgeon General: <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/>
- American Lung Association, The Vape Talk (for parents): <https://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/vape-talk/>

*This message is sent to you as a service of the State of Alaska DHSS, Division of Public Health, through the Section of Epidemiology, 3601 C Street, Suite 540, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, (907) 269-8000. The Section of Epidemiology maintains a 24-hour Emergency Number, 1-800-478-0084. Website:*

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi>