

August 27, 2019

Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Vaping

Actions Requested

- **Be aware of the elements of the common case definition:**
 - Inhalational drug use via e-cigarettes, AND
 - Clinical signs or symptoms of respiratory dysfunction +/- pulmonary infiltrate, AND
 - Absence of pulmonary infection and rheumatologic or neoplastic process.
- **Ask about the use of e-cigarette products** (devices, liquids, refill pods and/or cartridges) for “vaping” when patients present with a respiratory or pulmonary illness of unclear etiology.
- **If an e-cigarette product is suspected as a possible etiology of a patient’s illness, it is important to inquire what type of product and inquire if the patient is:**
 - using commercially available devices and/or liquids (i.e. bottles, cartridges or pods);
 - sharing e-cigarette products (devices, liquids, refill pods and/or cartridges) with other people;
 - re-using old cartridges or pods (with homemade or commercially bought products); or
 - heating the drug to concentrate it and then using a specific type of device to inhale the product (i.e., “dabbing”).
- **Report cases** of significant respiratory illness of unclear etiology and a history of vaping to KPHD by calling (360) 728-2235.

For questions related to severe pulmonary disease associated with vaping, please contact our Communicable Disease staff at 360-728-2235.

For more information about the outbreak and investigation, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/s0821-cdc-fda-states-e-cigarettes.html>

Background

As of 5:00 PM on August 22, 2019, 193 potential cases of severe lung illness associated with e-cigarette product use had been reported by 22 states. These were reported between June 28th and August 20th of this year. As of August 23rd, there has been one death reported. There have been no cases reported in WA at this time. CDC is providing consultation to state health departments about a cluster of pulmonary illnesses possibly related to e-cigarette product use, or “vaping”, primarily among adolescents and young adults. Investigations into reported cases are ongoing. In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working with CDC and state health officials to gather information on any products or substances used and providing technical and laboratory assistance. FDA encourages the public to submit detailed reports of any unexpected tobacco- or e-cigarette-related health or product issues to the FDA. While some cases in each of the states are similar and appear to be linked to e-cigarette product use, more information is needed to determine what is causing the illnesses.

CDC and states have not identified a cause, but all reported cases have reported e-cigarette product use or “vaping.” Available evidence does not suggest that an infectious disease is the principal cause of the illness. Investigators have not identified any specific product or compound that is linked to all cases. In many cases, patients reported a gradual start of symptoms including breathing difficulty, shortness of breath, and/or chest pain before hospitalization. Some cases reported mild to moderate gastrointestinal illness including vomiting and diarrhea and fatigue. Antibiotics have not been helpful, though some of the cases have responded to steroid therapies. In many cases, patients have acknowledged recent use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products while speaking to healthcare personnel or in follow-up interviews by health department staff; however, no specific product has been identified in all cases, nor has any product been conclusively linked to illnesses.