



Minnesota identifies severe lung injury cases among teens who reported vaping

8.13.19 The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is encouraging Minnesota health care providers to be on alert for novel cases of severe lung disease potentially related to vaping and e-cigarette use among teens and young adults.

Children's Minnesota has reported finding four cases of severe lung injury in the metro area potentially related to vaping. These cases are similar to lung disease cases recently reported in Wisconsin and Illinois, though it is too early to say whether they are connected.

“There are still many unanswered questions, but the health harms emerging from the current epidemic of youth vaping in Minnesota continue to increase,” said Dr. Ruth Lynfield, state epidemiologist and MDH medical director. “We are encouraging providers and parents to be on the look-out for vaping as a cause for unexplained breathing problems and lung injury and disease.”

In Minnesota, symptoms have resulted in hospitalizations lasting multiple weeks, with some patients being admitted to the intensive care unit. Product names are unknown.

“We are deeply concerned by the severe cases of lung injury associated with vaping that we are currently seeing,” said Dr. Emily Chapman, chief medical officer at Children's Minnesota. “These cases are extremely complex to diagnose, as symptoms can mimic a common infection yet can lead to severe complications and extended hospitalization. Medical attention is essential; respiratory conditions can continue to decline without proper treatment.”

Clinical presentation among Minnesota cases included shortness of breath, fever, cough, and vomiting and diarrhea. Other symptoms reported by some patients included headache, dizziness, and chest pain.

After receiving reports from Children's Thursday, MDH started working in partnership with Children's to learn more about the cases. Use of both nicotine and marijuana-based products were reported. The state health department is also asking providers to look for similar cases and report them. Clinicians should ask patients who present with pulmonary symptoms about tobacco and marijuana use, particularly vaping. Clinicians should consult with pulmonologists and evaluate for infectious diseases when treating patients with pulmonary symptoms who report a history of vaping.

Patients and people with a history of vaping who are experiencing lung symptoms should seek clinical care. Patients and those experiencing symptoms should avoid using e-cigarettes and other vaping products.

E-cigarette aerosol contains harmful chemicals, such as ultrafine particles, oil, heavy metals like nickel, tin and lead, and other cancer-causing chemicals. E-cigarettes, vapes, e-pipes and other vaping products are battery-powered devices that allow users to inhale aerosolized liquid. E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and harmful to the adolescent brain. Nicotine can impact learning, memory and attention span, and contributes to future addiction to tobacco and other substances.

The U.S. Surgeon General calls teen e-cigarette use an epidemic. Locally, the 2017 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey found that nearly 20% of high-school students use e-cigarettes and 40% have tried them. Youth e-cigarette use has surpassed conventional cigarettes as the most commonly used tobacco product category among youth. In addition, 34.7% of high school students and 15.8% of middle school students who currently use e-cigarettes have used an e-cigarette for recreational marijuana, THC or hash oil, or THC wax at least once in their lifetime. Learn more about e-cigarettes and other vaping products at [E-cigarettes and Vapes](#).

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