



Health officials confirm two more deaths from severe lung injuries associated with vaping

10.16.19 The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) today confirmed that two more Minnesotans have died due to complications from severe lung injuries associated with vaping.

MDH reported Minnesota's first vaping-related death Sept. 6. The two latest deaths involved people over the age of 50. Both died in September following complicated hospitalizations. The patients developed difficulty breathing, which prompted their hospitalizations. Investigators determined the first patient vaped a number of products including illegal THC. The second patient had severe underlying conditions and is believed to have vaped unknown products in addition to nicotine.

"We are saddened by the news of these deaths, and we are troubled that so many Minnesotans continue to suffer in this outbreak," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. "We're working hard with our partners across the country to learn as much as we can about these injuries and deaths, and to determine what can be done to prevent them."

Commissioner Malcolm said it is particularly important to avoid vaping anything containing illegal cannabis products, as almost all of those Minnesotans who developed severe lung injuries had a history of frequent vaping of illegal cannabis.

While investigators remain focused on these illegal products as a primary concern, health officials cannot guarantee the safety of any vaping products. People vaping nicotine to help quit smoking should consider alternative options to support their quit efforts. People vaping medicine from Minnesota's medical cannabis program should talk with their health care provider about whether another delivery method may be right for them. People who vape and experience signs of respiratory illness should seek medical care.

To date, Minnesota has 73 patients classified as confirmed or probable cases of severe lung injury associated with vaping. MDH is reviewing an additional 32 people to see if they meet the case criteria. Most of the cases have been hospitalized, and up to half of those who have been hospitalized required intensive care. Of those cases who have been interviewed, nearly all reported vaping illegal THC products. Many also reported vaping other products including nicotine. These findings are similar to those of other states. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most cases

of severe lung injury in the U.S. reported using products containing THC, particularly those obtained from illegal or black-market sources.

Nearly 1,300 lung injury cases associated with the use of e-cigarette or vaping products have been reported to CDC from 49 states, Washington, D.C. and one territory. Twenty-six deaths have been confirmed in 21 states. This count does not include the two Minnesota deaths announced today.

According to State Epidemiologist Dr. Ruth Lynfield, Minnesota may see additional deaths from vaping injuries in the weeks ahead.

“We hope we do not have any more deaths linked to this investigation,” Dr. Lynfield said. “However, based on what we know about other patients, the seriousness of the injuries and the fact that we continue to see new cases, it is possible we will have more deaths.”

With these two latest deaths, MDH will start listing vaping-related death totals along with other information about the vaping illnesses investigation on its [Vaping-Associated Lung Injuries](#) webpage. The information will be updated as new cases or deaths are reported.

More information on [vaping-related lung injuries](#) can be found on the MDH website.

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