



Public Health
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Facsimile Cover Page

Public Health Alert

IMPORTANT

High Importance

Urgent

Emergency

From: Dr. Donald Baird, Health Officer	Phone #: (707) 445-6201
Subject: Vaping Associated Pulmonary Injury	Fax: (707) 445-7346
Page 1 of 2	Sent: August 21 st , 2019

Attention: Office Manager

Upon receipt of this fax:

- Distribute copies to all your practitioners.

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DHHS Administration
phone: (707) 441-5400
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phone: (707) 268-2990
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HEALTH ALERT

August 21, 2019

Severe Acute Pulmonary Disease Associated with Cannabis or Cannabidiol Oil Vaping

- Since June, 20 cases of severe acute pulmonary disease requiring hospitalization and respiratory support among previously healthy adults have been reported in California. This number of cases greatly exceeds the number otherwise expected since June.
- A reported common exposure among these patients is that they have been vaping cannabis or cannabidiol (CBD) oils. At this time, no infectious cause has been identified.
- Clinicians who become aware of cases similar to those described above are asked to report them to their local health department.

Current Situation

Since June 2019, at least 20 cases of severe acute pulmonary disease in previously healthy adults were reported from a Kings County hospital. Cases were among residents of multiple counties. The patients presented with progressive respiratory distress, sometimes initially diagnosed with pneumonia or bronchitis, and some with preceding fevers and gastrointestinal symptoms. All cases failed to respond to an initial course of antibiotic treatment. All patients required admission to the hospital with significant respiratory support, including high-flow oxygen, bilevel positive airway pressure (BIPAP), or intubation with mechanical ventilation. Diagnoses included pneumonitis and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Patients have improved with systemic steroids. Evaluation for infectious etiologies has been negative to date in all patients.

California Department of Public Health is currently investigating the cause of these illnesses. All patients reported vaping in the weeks prior to hospital admission, and a reported common exposure between these patients is that they have been vaping cannabis or CBD oils. The names and types of products used remain unknown, and patient interviews are ongoing. Other states have reported recent similar cases.

Background

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.

Case Definition

A case is defined as meeting the following criteria:

- Severe acute pulmonary disease (including but not limited to pneumonitis and ARDS);
- Requiring admission to a hospital and respiratory support (including but not limited to high-flow oxygen, BIPAP, or intubation with mechanical ventilation);
- No infectious etiology defined;
- Recent history of vaping;
- Symptom onset on or after June 1, 2019.

Recommendations for Providers

- Clinicians are asked to remain alert for potential cases among persons presenting with severe acute pulmonary symptoms, and ask these patients about their recent history of vaping.
- Consider history of vaping in patients who were seen in primary care and initially diagnosed with pneumonia or bronchitis, but did not respond to antibiotics.
- Clinicians who become aware of cases similar to those described above are encouraged to report them to their local health department. For questions, please contact (707) 268-2182 or email cdnurse@co.humboldt.ca.us
- If patient has the product in hand, please collect & hold and contact Public Health CD at (707) 268-2182 or email cdnurse@co.humboldt.ca.us so that the product can be collected for testing.

