

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Department of Public Health identifies tenth case of vaping-related pulmonary disease in the county

OXNARD, Calif. – Earlier this week, Ventura County’s tenth case of e-cigarette, or vaping, product use associated lung injury, the new pulmonary disease associated with vaping, was accepted as meeting the case definition by the California Department of Public Health.

The Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, state and local health departments, and other clinical and public health partners are investigating a national outbreak of EVALI and possible causes of this progressive and often severe respiratory disease. This disease is sometimes mistaken for pneumonia due to infection. These cases may be preceded or accompanied by fever and gastrointestinal symptoms. All of the cases failed to respond to an initial course of antibiotic treatment. Patients have been admitted to the hospital for respiratory support, including oxygen and in some cases intubation with mechanical ventilation. Many patients have improved with steroids although some have not regained completely normal lung function.

“I’m concerned that vaping, especially vaping products that contain nicotine, is a gateway to cigarette smoking, that it carries a risk of causing lung cancer and that there are unknown risks associated with all the different flavors and other uncontrolled substances in the vaped material,” said Dr. Robert Levin, Health Officer for Ventura County. “This association between vaping and EVALI makes quitting altogether the best choice.”

Vaping refers to the practice of inhaling vapor from an e-cigarette device, which works by heating a liquid that can contain nicotine, marijuana, or other substances. The long-term health impact of vaping is still under investigation. The liquids used in e-cigarettes are largely unregulated, and they can contain toxic chemicals that can cause lung damage. The common perception that vaping is safe or safer than smoking has been open to question with health authorities expressing increasing concerns about its dangers.

The CDC recommends that people should not buy any type of e-cigarette, or vaping, products, particularly those containing THC from informal sources like friends, or family, or in-person or online dealers; nor modify or add any substances to e-cigarette, or vaping, products that are not intended by the manufacturer, including products purchased through retail establishments. All patients being evaluated for severe respiratory distress by the CDC reported vaping in the weeks prior to hospital admission, and a reported

common exposure between these patients is that they had been vaping either THC-containing e-cigarettes or nicotine. No one specific brand name of vaping product has been implicated.

“For over 30 years, we have seen the decline of tobacco use in the U.S reach historic lows. It is alarming that in such a short period, we are now seeing the “renormalization” of tobacco use with the introduction of vaping and vaping products. Vaping and the flavors used to mask the harshness of the vaping products is threatening to hook a new generation of young people on nicotine,” says Selfa Saucedo, Director for Health Education with Ventura County.

As of November 20, 2019, nationally there have been 2,290 cases of EVALI and 47 patients have died. As of November 19, 2019, the California Department of Public Health has received 166 reports of severe respiratory disease and 4 deaths have been confirmed.

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