



Health officials suspect new cases of severe lung injuries associated with vaping

On July 27th, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) sent an alert to health care providers in response to reports of 11 suspected cases in Minnesota of severe lung injuries associated with vaping.

The vaping cases in Minnesotans ages 14- to 46-years old occurred in June and July, with a median age of 18 years. Diagnosis was made more difficult because the symptoms of the disease can be similar to those of COVID-19. All 11 cases resulted in hospitalizations with some requiring intensive care, including being placed on ventilators.

“This public health threat got a lot of attention last year, and unfortunately it has not gone away,” Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm said. “We want providers and the public to be aware of the continued dangers of vaping products, and the possibility of lung injuries presenting as COVID-19. As we continue to investigate the causes of the lung injuries, we encourage people to take advantage of our free Quit Partner resources to help with quitting vaping.”

The patients sought care for symptoms similar to severe COVID-19 infection, including cough and shortness of breath. However, testing found the patients were not infected. Patients also responded to systemic steroid therapy, the treatment for e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).

The patients said they had a history of vaping. Most reported vaping THC or tetrahydrocannabinol, the principal and most active ingredient in marijuana. Some reported using nicotine-based products. There are similar reports of a resurgence of lung injury cases in California.

“With this resurgence of cases, we are advising patients with a history of vaping who are experiencing lung-injury symptoms to seek clinical care,” said MDH State Epidemiologist and Medical Director Dr. Ruth Lynfield. “In addition, because this can present like COVID-19, providers also need to conduct a test to rule this out.”

Clinical presentation for EVALI includes shortness of breath, cough, fever, malaise and gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain or diarrhea). Other symptoms reported by some patients included headache, dizziness and chest pain.

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

[Quit Partner](#) is Minnesota’s new family of programs from the Minnesota Department of Health and offers free support – like coaching and quit medications – for quitting commercial tobacco. On Aug. 1, the state of Minnesota will implement a Tobacco 21 law that will ensure implementation, compliance and enforcement of a commercial tobacco sale age of 21 years old. The state law will strengthen a

national Tobacco 21 law that went into effect in December 2019 by allowing local governments to conduct compliance checks and ensure the law is being followed.

Minnesota was one of the first states to join with federal and state partners to investigate the vaping-associated lung injury outbreak of 2019. MDH first alerted health care providers to the condition in August 2019. Minnesota's outbreak mirrored the national outbreak. Minnesota's cases peaked in September through October of 2019. Cases fell off until MDH wound down its emergency response in January 2020. At the end of the emergency response, Minnesota had 149 confirmed or probable cases and three confirmed deaths.

-MDH-

Media inquiries:

Scott Smith
MDH Communications
651-503-1440
scott.smith@state.mn.us

