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 **Severe Lung Disease Among Utahns Who Reported Vaping Nicotine, THC or Both**

**Updated September 3, 2019**------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Current Situation**

* Utah public health continues to investigate cases of severe lung disease in people who vape nicotine or THC products. Currently, 28 cases associated with vaping nicotine, THC, or both have been reported in Utah with 14 additional cases under investigation.
  + Utah cases have occurred in teens to adults with the majority of cases occurring in individuals younger than 30 years of age.
  + Updates will be provided on the Utah Department of Health website, health.utah.gov, and on Facebook and Twitter every Monday throughout the investigation.
* Patients presented with respiratory systems including cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, and fatigue. Other symptoms included nausea and vomiting.
  + The majority of Utah cases have been hospitalized.
* While patients have improved with treatment, it is unknown whether there will be long-term health effects.
* Similar cases have recently been reported in [25 states](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html). According to CDC, not all are confirmed severe lung illness associated with e-cigarette product use.
* UDOH is coordinating with state and federal partners on testing vaping products to determine if the products contain inhalational drugs, e.g., nicotine, THC, or any other harmful substances that may contribute to severe lung illness.

**Key Points**

* Utah public health continues to investigate cases of severe lung disease in people who vape nicotine or THC products. Currently, 28 cases associated with vaping nicotine, THC, or both have been reported in Utah with five more cases under investigation.
* Similar cases have recently been reported in [25 states](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html). According to CDC, not all are confirmed severe lung illness associated with e-cigarette product use.
  + **The available evidence does not currently suggest that an infectious disease is the cause of the illnesses.**
  + **The investigation has not identified any specific substance or e-cigarette product that is linked to all cases.**
* UDOH is coordinating with state and federal partners on testing vaping products to determine if the products contain inhalational drugs, e.g., nicotine, THC, or any other harmful substances that may contribute to severe lung illness.
* E-cigarettes are still a relatively new tobacco product, and additional research is needed to better understand the dangers and long-term risks of using them.
* E-cigarettes are devices that deliver an aerosol to the user by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals. E-cigarettes can also be used to deliver marijuana or other substances.
* **Utahns are urged to use caution when considering vaping, including THC cartridges, as the safety of these products has not been demonstrated.**
* **Even though diseases associated with vaping are rare, the severity of the cases is enough to warn people who vape.** 
  + **While, vaping has been promoted as a safer alternative to smoking, the CDC says e-cigarettes are not safe for youth, young adults, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products.**
  + **If you do use e-cigarette products, you should not buy these products off the street (for example, e-cigarette products with THC or other cannabinoids).**
  + **You should not modify e-cigarette products or add any substances to these products that are not intended by the manufacturer.**
  + **Adult smokers who are attempting to quit should use evidence-based treatments, including counseling and FDA-approved medications. If you need help quitting tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, contact your doctor or other medical provider.**
* **Individuals who experience any type of chest pain or difficulty breathing after vaping should seek immediate medical attention.**
* People presenting to hospital emergency rooms or urgent cares with symptoms may not consider vaping as something that could be causing problems and may not include it in their history, making it more difficult to determine a cause of illness.
* Healthcare providers treating patients with unexpected serious respiratory illness should ask about a history of recent vaping and are encouraged to report suspect cases to the UDOH or local health departments.
* The CDC recommends that if you've never smoked or used other tobacco products or e-cigarettes, you should not start.

**Statistics**

* Earlier this year, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory which referred to vaping as a national epidemic, and a "cause for great concern."
  + In the advisory, the U.S. Surgeon General warned that e-cigarette aerosol is not harmless, and the aerosol users inhale and exhale from e-cigarettes can potentially expose both users and bystanders to harmful substances, including heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deeply into the lungs.
  + In Utah, e-cigarette use among young people nearly doubled from 2013-2018.
  + Between 2011 and 2015, e-cigarette use among U.S. middle and high school students increased 900%.
  + From 2017-2018, e-cigarette use among U.S. high school students rose from 11.7%, to 20.8%.
  + One in five U.S. high school students, and one in 20 middle school students currently use e-cigarettes.
* E-cigarettes often contain high levels of nicotine, which can harm the developing brain.
  + Nicotine exposure during adolescence can impact learning, memory, and attention.
  + Nicotine use during adolescence can also increase the risk for future addiction to other drugs.
* Some of the chemicals used to make flavors for e-cigarette juice may also have health risks.

**Public Health Efforts**

* UDOH is coordinating with CDC, LHDs, UPHL and other states and has initiated Incident Command System (ICS) for this event.
  + ICS is a coordinated approach to incident management with multiple agencies and partners that can apply to incidents or emergencies of all types and sizes.
* UDOH is actively tracking cases and reaching out to LHDs and clinicians for assistance to determine the scope and cause of this disease cluster.
  + Public health workers are interviewing patients to obtain a history of their vaping habits, including the types of products they've been using and how frequently they use them.
  + They are also collecting product samples from patients and are coordinating with state and federal partners to test these products to determine if they contain harmful substances that may contribute to severe lung illness.
* For questions and reporting, contact Nathaniel Lewis at UDOH at 801-538-9465 or [CDCEISnml@utah.gov](mailto:CDCEISnml@utah.gov).
* In March, Gov. Gary Herbert signed bill [HB324](https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/HB0324.html) to raise the tobacco and e-cigarette sales age from 19 to 21.
* Information about e-cigarettes and vapes can be found on the UDOH website at [https://thetobaccotalk.org/#products](https://thetobaccotalk.org/%23products).
* For information about how you can help yourself or a loved one quit tobacco, including e-cigarettes, please visit waytoquit.org, or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
* Way to Quit provides information, as well as a number of resources that can put you, or a loved one on the path to a successful quit attempt.
  + In addition to e-coaching, live chats, educational materials, and text message or email reminders, Way to Quit provides free nicotine replacement therapy, such as gum and patches, to those who qualify.
* Find CDC updates at <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html>.