

# THIS IS AN OFFICIAL NH DHHS HEALTH ALERT

Distributed by the NH Health Alert Network  
[Health.Alert@nh.gov](mailto:Health.Alert@nh.gov)  
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NH-HAN 20191007



## Vaping-Associated Lung Injury Identified in NH

### Key Points and Recommendations:

1. As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1,080 cases of lung injury associated with vaping have been reported from 48 states and one U.S. territory; about 80% of patients are under 35 years of age.
2. New Hampshire has identified its first probable case of vaping-associated lung injury consistent with [national case definitions](#).
3. Nationally, the majority of patients with vaping-associated lung injury (78%) reported use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) containing products (with or without use of nicotine products), and these THC-containing products were often obtained from informal sources (e.g., illicit dealers). Not all cases report THC use, and a specific chemical cause has not yet been identified:
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/pdfs/mm6839e1-H.pdf>
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/pdfs/mm6839e2-H.pdf>
  - [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html)
4. All clinicians should inquire about e-cigarette use, or vaping, in patients presenting with pulmonary illness (ask about both nicotine and THC use). Consider vaping-associated lung injury as a potential cause in patients reporting e-cigarette use in the 90 days prior to symptom onset and who have abnormal pulmonary infiltrates on chest imaging.
5. Work-up for a potential infectious cause (e.g. viral or bacterial pneumonia) should include sputum culture, and influenza and other respiratory virus testing.
6. While this investigation is ongoing, the CDC recommends that people refrain from using e-cigarettes, or vaping products, particularly those containing THC.
7. Counsel patients regarding the following:
  - E-cigarettes should not be used by youth, young adults, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products.
  - Adults who use e-cigarettes because they have quit smoking should be offered FDA approved cessation therapy, and should not return to smoking cigarettes.
  - People who use e-cigarette products should not obtain them from informal sources and they should not modify e-cigarette devices or add any substances that are not intended by the manufacturer.
  - Patients who continue to use e-cigarettes or vaping products should carefully monitor themselves and seek medical attention for new respiratory symptoms.
8. Patients with nicotine or cannabis (marijuana) use disorders who are interested in quitting should use evidence-based treatments, which can include psychosocial interventions (e.g. counseling) and pharmacologic therapy.
9. Several resources are available in NH to help adolescents and adults quit nicotine use:

- “**My Life, My Quit**” offers adolescents (under the age of 18) access to specially trained Quit Coaches that will help them build a quit plan, identify triggers, practice refusal skills, and obtain ongoing support for changing behaviors. Teens can enroll by going to <https://mylifemyquit.com/>, or by calling **1-855-891-9989**.
- “**QuitNow-NH**” provides adults (18 years of age or older) access to specially trained Quit Coaches that will help them choose nicotine replacement medicines and offer ways to prevent cravings and avoid triggers. Adults can call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or enroll online at <https://quitnownh.org/>.
- Clinicians can also refer both adolescents and adults to “My Life, My Quit” and “QuitNow-NH,” respectively, through a single HIPAA compliant [Web Referral](#) system.

10. Clinicians should report all suspect cases of vaping-associated lung injury to the NH DPHS at 603-271-4496 (after hours 603-271-5300 and ask for the public health nurse on call).

### Situation Update

New Hampshire has identified our first individual with probable vaping-associated lung illness. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and state/local health departments continue to investigate a national outbreak of e-cigarette or vaping-associated pulmonary illness. As of October 1, 2019 there have been 1,080 cases reported to the CDC from 48 states and one territorial health department, including 18 deaths. About 90% of patients were hospitalized.

Nationally, 70% of reported cases are male with a median age of 23 years (range 13-75 years old); however, 65% of reported cases were aged 18-34 years, and 16% were younger than 18 years of age. For those whom substance use history was known (N=578 patients), 78% have reported using THC-containing products and 58% reported using nicotine-containing products. Only 17% reported exclusive use of nicotine-containing products, compared to 37% reporting exclusive use of THC-containing products

- <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/pdfs/mm6839e1-H.pdf>
- [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html)

Based on the investigation of the initial cluster of illnesses in Illinois and Wisconsin, nearly all THC-containing products used by patients with vaping-associated lung injury obtained their THC products from “informal sources” (e.g. family, friends, illicit dealers, etc.). Most reported using THC-containing products that were packaged, pre-filled cartridges, a majority of which went under the name “Dank Vapes” which is a prominent counterfeit brand used to market THC-containing devices with no obvious centralized production or distribution source.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/pdfs/mm6839e2-H.pdf>

The investigation has not yet determined a specific chemical exposure causing this outbreak. Even though a majority of individuals with reported vaping-associated lung injury have reported use of THC-containing products (with or without use of nicotine-containing products), it is not clear whether THC, or a solvent, cutting agent, or adulterant in vaping solutions is causing lung injury. Some patients also report using only nicotine-containing products.

Routine weekly updates on the national investigation can be found on the CDC website:

- [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html)

Further information about e-cigarettes and vaping can be found here:

- [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/about-e-cigarettes.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/about-e-cigarettes.html).

For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please call Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at (603) 271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345, extension 4496 during business hours (8 am to 4:30 pm). For after hours or on weekends call the New Hampshire Hospital switchboard at 1-800-852-3345 extension 5300 and request the Public Health Professional on-call.

To change your contact information in the NH Health Alert Network, contact Adnela Alic at 603-271-7499 or email [adnela.alic@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:adnela.alic@dhhs.nh.gov).

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Originating Agency: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

**Attachments:** None