



Public Health
Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: All Healthcare Providers in Santa Cruz County
From: Gail Newel, MD, MPH, County Public Health Officer
Subject: Vaping-Associated Pulmonary Injury
Date: August 20, 2019

Current Situation: The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is reporting 20 cases of severe acute pulmonary disease among previously healthy adults associated with cannabis or cannabidiol (CBD) oil vaping in multiple counties across California. This number greatly exceeds the number otherwise expected since June 2019. All cases are severe, requiring respiratory support and hospitalization. The cases 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 and evaluations for infectious etiologies were negative. CDPH is currently investigating potential contaminants.

Background: 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 drugs. The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown. The liquids used in e-cigarettes can contain toxic chemicals that can cause lung damage.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers:

- **Remain alert for potential cases.** Clinical and exposure criteria include:
 - Severe acute pulmonary disease (including but not limited to pneumonitis and ARDS);
 - Admission to a hospital and respiratory support (including but not limited to high-flow oxygen, BIPAP, or intubation with mechanical ventilation);
 - Infectious etiology defined;
 - Recent history of vaping; and
 - Symptom onset on or after June 1, 2019.
- **Ask about vaping and obtain product, if available.**
 - Request information on the type of product, the brand name, and location where purchased.
 - If the patient has the product in hand, please collect and hold for Public Health.
 - Keep product samples sealed and stored in a secure manner. Samples should be stored in the refrigerator in case there is microbial contaminant. Store samples upright in sealed plastic bags.
 - Ensure samples are labeled with documentation that allows for identification of the case patient from which they were obtained and hold all samples for Santa Cruz County Public Health.
- **Report suspect cases** to the Santa Cruz County Communicable Disease Unit at (831) 454-4114.

Reference: CDPH California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) – Severe Acute Pulmonary Disease Associated with Cannabis and Cannabidiol Oil Vaping (August 9, 2019)

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

