



Vaping-related death FAQ

9/27/19

What's happening?

Nationwide, hundreds of people have suffered from lung injury after vaping or using e-cigarettes. Most of them have been teens or young adults. Many have needed hospitalization. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Public Health Division has confirmed multiple cases of this respiratory illness, and sadly, some people have died, as has been the case around the country.

Those affected report cough, chest pain and trouble breathing. Some also had diarrhea, vomiting and fever. Most of the confirmed cases around the country have required hospitalization, and many have required mechanical ventilation or other breathing support.

There is no indication that the condition is an infection. Respiratory symptoms in the national outbreak have not responded to antibiotics, although some people's symptoms have improved with steroids.

Who is affected?

Most illnesses have been among adolescents and young adults, although some have been reported in older adults. Males are more commonly affected than females.

No specific brands of e-cigarettes, vaping devices or liquids have been conclusively linked to the illnesses at this time. However, it appears that most of the cases have been among people who vaped cannabis products.

How has OHA responded?

We are working closely with local public health authorities and Oregon's health care community to quickly identify others in our state who might be affected.

OHA has contacted health care providers and hospitals throughout Oregon, as well as local health departments and tribal health agencies. We are asking that health care providers notify us about any hospitalized patients who have severe lung disease without another obvious cause, and who have vaped any substance in the past 90 days.

What should people do?

We don't yet know for sure if vaping is the cause of these injuries. Still, there were already big concerns about health effects of vaping. Given the number of people affected by this new illness, vaping seems like an even worse idea than it did before. There is a simple way to protect yourself from this: Don't vape.

If you vape and you get chest pain, cough or trouble breathing, talk to your health care provider. Before the new illness reports, we were already very concerned about the health risks of vaping products. OHA recently [reported](#) on the health risks of these products, including nicotine addiction, exposure to toxic chemicals known to cause cancer, and increased blood pressure. The liquids used in e-cigarettes and vaping devices are mostly unregulated, and the long-term health effects of vaping are unknown.

These serious new illnesses linked to vaping are another reason for people to not vape, or to quit if they're ready. We don't yet know which types of e-cigarettes or vaping devices are causing this serious illness, so the safest thing to do is not to vape at all.

If you or someone you know is ready to quit smoking or vaping, free help is available from the following resources:

- 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669), <http://www.quitnow.net/Oregon>
- Español: 855-DEJALO-YA (855-335356-92), <https://www.quitnow.net/oregonsp/>
- <http://www.thisisquitting.com/> (youth quit resource for vaping)

Those who want help quitting cannabis or other substance use can call 1-800-662-HELP.

Switching to cigarettes or other combustible products is not a safer option.

How many people use these products?

Nationally and in Oregon, e-cigarette use is rising rapidly, especially among youth. In Oregon, 23% of 11th-graders reported current e-cigarette use in 2019, up from 13% in 2017. Nationally, high school e-cigarette use increased 78% between 2017 and 2018.

E-cigarettes are available in a wide variety of flavors that appeal to youth and young adults.

In a recent assessment of the tobacco retail environment in Oregon, state and local public health department staff found that nearly nine out of 10 tobacco retailers sold fruit- or candy-flavored e-cigarettes or cigarillos. This includes e-cigarettes in flavors such as “Pebbles Donuts.”

There are evidence-based solutions to reduce tobacco industry marketing, protect kids and help people quit. Oregon is one of only nine states that doesn't require a license to sell tobacco, which can help reduce youth access to these deadly products.