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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTIGATING SECOND CASE OF SEVERE RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS POSSIBLY RELATED TO VAPING

CONNECTICUT AND SEVERAL OTHER STATES COLLABORATING WITH FEDERAL CDC
TO FIND SOURCE OF SYMPTOMS CAUSING HOSPITALIZATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH
BOTH NICOTINE AND MARIJUANA E-CIGARETTE USE

HARTFORD, CT – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is investigating cases of severe respiratory symptoms including shortness of breath, fever, cough, vomiting and diarrhea that have resulted in the hospitalizations of two individuals in the state. In both cases, the patients admitted to vaping and e-cigarette use, with both nicotine and marijuana products. These two cases follow similar reports coming in from medical providers across the country and recent federal guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for physicians to be on the lookout for respiratory issues potentially associated with usage of vaping and e-cigarette products. Link to the CDC warning on vaping and e-cigarette use can be found here: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/newsletters/coca/081619.htm>

“Vaping for both nicotine and marijuana related products is on the rise in our state and nationally – especially among young people – so these cases are a real public health concern,” said DPH Commissioner Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell. “We are asking all medical providers or family members of patients who vape to pay close attention or be aware of breathing issues and severe lung injury related to vaping and e-cigarette usage. People with a history of vaping who are experiencing breathing issues should seek medical attention or contact their provider as respiratory conditions can continue to decline without proper treatment.”

In addition to previously mentioned symptoms, other symptoms included in cases being studied nationally include headaches, dizziness, and chest pain. While it may present similar to a common infection, this particular respiratory illness may lead to severe complications and extended hospitalization. Those with symptoms should avoid using e-cigarettes and other vaping products. Clinicians should consult with pulmonologists and evaluate for infectious diseases when treating patients with pulmonary symptoms who report a history of vaping.

E-cigarettes, vapes, e-pipes and other vaping products are battery-powered devices that people can use to inhale aerosolized liquids. Some liquids contain nicotine, which is very addictive and harmful to adolescent brains. Some liquids contain marijuana products such as THC and CBD. Many contain flavoring enhancers such as diacetyl which has been associated with severe and sometimes fatal lung disease. The inhaled aerosols from vaping devices also contain many other harmful chemicals such as ultrafine particles, oils, heavy metals like nickel, tin and lead, and possible cancer-causing chemicals. The most recent, fourth-generation vaping devices release much greater amounts of aerosol, leading to higher levels of these toxic chemicals reaching the lungs and a greater risk of lung damage.

“We are concerned about the increasing use and acceptance of e-cigarettes by teens and the general public as a perceived safe replacement for traditional tobacco products,” said Barbara Walsh, Supervisor of DPH’s Tobacco Control Program. “There are still many health concerns associated with e-cigarettes including high levels of nicotine and chemicals; youth who become addicted are more likely to have future addiction to both tobacco and other substances. We will continue our statewide efforts to inform the public of the risks.”

The U.S. Surgeon General has called teen e-cigarette use an epidemic. According to the CDC since 2014 e-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among both middle and high school students. DPH’s 2017 [CT Youth Tobacco Survey](#) reports 14.7% of high school teens report using e-cigarettes. On that survey, 10.2% of 9th grade students report using e-cigarettes but by 12th grade the number increases to 20.4%. Over half of high school youth who vape report using their devices for other products including marijuana and THC.

To learn more about e-cigarettes and other vaping products, click on this link:
https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/features/back-to-school/e-cigarettes-talk-to-youth-about-risks/index.html?s_cid=OSH_misc_M142