

NEWS

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Department of Public Health and Human Services

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Health officials identify two additional cases related to severe pulmonary disease associated with vaping

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) officials have identified two additional cases of illness related to the national outbreak of e-cigarette use, or vaping. Montana now has five identified cases, including one death.

DPHHS officials said one new case involves an individual from Cascade County in their teens who was initially hospitalized this past summer and then again in October.

The second new case involves an individual from Lake County in their 30s who was also hospitalized in October.

Both individuals are now recovering. One case reported a history of vaping nicotine and THC and the other THC only.

DPHHS State Medical Officer Dr. Greg Holzman said it's not a surprise that more cases have been confirmed. "We continue to work with local public health on more investigations across the state," Holzman said. "We appreciate the assistance from local public health, family members and the general public in sharing valuable information and vaping products that are being collected."

DPHHS continues to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and local public health as this ongoing national investigation continues. On October 24, 2019 the CDC reported 1,604 lung injury cases associated with the use of e-cigarette, or vaping, products from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and one U.S. territory. The CDC also reported a total of 34 deaths in 24 states last week.

DPHHS State Epidemiologist Laura Williamson said at this time, FDA and CDC have not identified the cause or causes of the lung injuries in these cases, and the only commonality

among all cases is that patients report the use of vaping products, including e-cigarettes. No one compound or ingredient has emerged as the cause of these illnesses to date; and it may be that there is more than one cause of this outbreak.

“Based on what is known at this time, the only way to assure that you are not at risk is to consider refraining from the use of all e-cigarette or vaping products,” Williamson said.

With the current known information, DPHHS officials specifically highlight the CDC recommendation that individuals do not use e-cigarette or vaping products that are purchased off the street. Individuals should also not modify or add any substances to e-cigarette or vaping products, even if those products are purchased through retail establishments.

With the fast pace of the ongoing outbreak, the latest information and recommendations are available on the [CDC website](#).

Regardless of the ongoing investigation, health officials state that e-cigarette products should never be used by youth, young adults, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products.

Those involved in the national outbreak report symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, chest pain, and fatigue. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are also common. Symptoms worsen over a period of days or weeks and do not appear to be caused by a pulmonary infection. Anyone who vapes and is experiencing respiratory issues should promptly consult their provider.

Healthcare providers treating patients with respiratory illness with no apparent infectious cause and who have a history of e-cigarette use are asked to notify their [local health department](#).

DPHHS has added vaping associated pulmonary illness to the list of reportable diseases and conditions to aid in the epidemiological investigation of the outbreak.

In addition to the national outbreak, e-cigarette use is also an epidemic among Montana youth. The dramatic increase in use of e-cigarettes, or vaping, by youth is driven in large part by flavored e-liquids, and flavors are a principal reason that youth initiate and maintain e-cigarette use. E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among high school students.

A court hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, October 30 to address the emergency rules to temporarily ban flavored e-cigarette products. Fruit and candy-flavored products are marketed to youth in epidemic proportions and the ban seeks to keep the addictive products out of kids' hands.

DPHHS states the high rate of e-cigarette use among youth is alarming. The 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed nearly a third (30%) of Montana high school students currently use e-cigarettes and more than half (58%) have tried them.

If you are a youth or adult who is trying to quit smoking, go to the DPHHS website dphhs.mt.gov.