

New Mexico health dept. reports eight cases of severe lung disease associated with vaping

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SANTA FE, NM – The New Mexico Department of Health reports the number of cases it's investigating of severe lung disease associated with vaping and e-cigarette use in the state has risen to eight. All eight New Mexico residents have required hospitalization following the development of respiratory symptoms such as cough and difficulty breathing. Five of them required intensive care during their hospitalizations.

The patients range from 17 to 46 years of age and reside in three counties, Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Bernalillo. Five of the eight patients are male. All of patients who have been interviewed regarding vaping behavior reported the use of vape cartridges containing Tetra hydro cannabinol oil.

Over 200 people across the United States, including one who has died, have been identified with severe breathing problems after vaping with symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. NMDOH, other states and CDC continue to investigate possible causes of these illnesses. Patients have reported vaping or dabbing marijuana oils, extracts, or concentrates in the weeks and months prior to hospital admission. The products and devices used are being investigated and could contain several substances, including nicotine, THC, synthetic cannabinoids, or a combination of these.

All patients interviewed by NMDOH have reported vaping THC products that were acquired via a secondhand source in the weeks and months prior to illness.

"Because of the association of this very severe new disease with vaping THC, we are advising New Mexicans not to use these products out of an abundance of caution," said NMDOH Cabinet Secretary Kathy Kunkel. "Our department is continuing to work with other state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate this new disease."

People with trouble breathing or experiencing chest pain after vaping - in the weeks or months prior to the development of these symptoms - should seek immediate medical attention. The NMDOH is asking health care providers to report possible vaping associated lung disease cases to the Epidemiology and Response Division at 505-827-0006.

