

# HEALTH ADVISORY



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## **REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH**

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum  
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

**To: Physicians and other health care providers**

**Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider  
in your organization.**

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH**

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8412

Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

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### **Alert categories:**

**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; no immediate action necessary.

## **Outbreak of Severe Lung Disease Associated E-cigarette Use or Vaping Three Cases Identified in Washington**

### ***Background***

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As of September 11, 2019, 380 cases of lung illness associated with the use of e-cigarette products have been reported to CDC from 36 states and six deaths have been confirmed. As of September 15, 2019, three additional cases have been reported in Washington State from King County and Spokane County.

All patients have a reported history of e-cigarette product use, and no consistent evidence of an infectious cause has been discovered. Therefore, the suspected cause is a chemical exposure. Most patients have reported a history of using e-cigarette products containing THC only, THC and nicotine, as well as only nicotine.

No consistent e-cigarette or vaping product, substance, or additive has been identified in all cases, nor has any one product or substance been conclusively linked to lung disease in patients. These investigations are ongoing.

### ***Action Requested***

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- Ask all patients with severe pulmonary illness whether they have used any e-cigarette or vaping products in the last 90 days.
- Report patients hospitalized with severe pulmonary illness of unclear etiology and a history of e-cigarette or vaping product use within the past 90 days to your local health department.
- If e-cigarette or vaping product use is suspected as a possible etiology of a patient's severe pulmonary illness, obtain detailed history regarding substance(s) used, substance source(s), device(s) used, product modifications by the user, where the product(s) were purchased, method of substance use, and other potential cases.
- Determine if any remaining product, including devices and liquids, are available for testing. Testing can be coordinated with your local health department.
- Consider all possible causes of illness in patients reporting respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms and e-cigarette/vaping product use. Evaluate and treat for other possible causes of illness (e.g., infectious, rheumatologic, neoplastic) as clinically indicated. Consider consultation with specialists (pulmonary, infectious disease, critical care, medical toxicology) as appropriate.

### ***Other Clinical Considerations***

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- Clinical improvement of patients with severe pulmonary disease associated with e-cigarette use has been reported with the use of corticosteroids. The decision to use corticosteroids should be made on a case-by-case basis based on risks and benefits and the likelihood of other etiologies.
- Lipoid pneumonia associated with inhalation of lipids in aerosols generated by e-cigarettes has been reported based on the detection of lipid-laden alveolar macrophages obtained by

bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) and lipid staining (e.g., oil red O). The decision about whether to perform a BAL should be based on individual clinical circumstances.

- Lung biopsies have been performed on some patients. If a lung biopsy is obtained, lipid staining may be considered during pathologic examination, and is best performed on fresh tissue. Routine pathology tissue processing (including formalin-fixation and paraffin-embedding) can remove lipids. Conducting routine tissue processing and histopathologic evaluation is still important. Consider consultation with specialists in pulmonary medicine and pathology to help inform any evaluation plan.
- Patients who have received treatment for severe pulmonary illness related to e-cigarette or vaping product use should undergo follow-up evaluation as clinically indicated to monitor pulmonary function.

### ***Additional Resources***

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- CDC is hosting a webinar for clinicians on “Severe Lung Illness Associated with Using E-Cigarette Products” on Thursday, Sept 19, 2019 at 11:00am-12:00pm. Information for this call is available at: [https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2019/callinfo\\_091919.asp?deliveryName=DM8936](https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2019/callinfo_091919.asp?deliveryName=DM8936)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Outbreak of Lung Disease Associated with E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping](#)
- MMWR: [Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Electronic-Cigarette–Product Use — Interim Guidance](#)
- MMWR: [Notes from the Field: Outbreak of Electronic-Cigarette Associated Acute Lipoid Pneumonia—North Carolina, July–August, 2019](#)
- New England Journal of Medicine: [Pulmonary Illness Related to E-Cigarette Use in Illinois and Wisconsin — Preliminary Report](#)

**Thank you for your partnership.**

<b>Local health jurisdiction</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax</b>
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Cowlitz County Health Department	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143

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