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National Investigation into Unexplained Vaping-Associated Pulmonary Illness

Key Points and Recommendations:

1. As of August 22nd, 193 potential cases of severe lung illness associated with vaping have been reported from 22 states, primarily among adolescents and young adults.
2. Clinicians should review the information and guidance put out by the CDC:
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/newsletters/coca/081619.htm>.
3. No cases of vaping-associated pulmonary illness have been confirmed in New Hampshire.
4. Patients have presented with respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, pleuritic chest pain) progressive over days to weeks, sometimes requiring mechanical ventilation. Chest imaging usually shows bilateral opacities on radiograph and diffuse ground-glass opacities on CT. Infectious work-up usually is negative.
5. All cases have reported "vaping" (use of e-cigarette devices to aerosolize substances for inhalation), including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products, although no single product or chemical has been identified for all cases.
6. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are supporting states in their investigation, including testing of vaping products and solutions.
7. If an e-cigarette product is suspected as a possible etiology of a patient's illness, it is important to inquire about type of product as well as if the patient:
 - Uses commercially available devices and/or liquids (i.e. bottles, cartridges or pods)
 - Shares e-cigarette products (devices, liquids, refill pods and/or cartridges) with other people
 - Re-uses old cartridges or pods (with homemade or commercially bought products)
 - Heats the drug to concentrate it and then using a specific type of device to inhale the product (i.e., "dabbing")
 - Has any retained product (including devices and liquids), for possible testing to be coordinated through the NH Division of Public Health Services (DPHS)
8. There are no tests to diagnose vaping-associated pulmonary illness, which is primarily a diagnosis of exclusion after infectious and other routine work-up fails to identify an etiology.
9. Healthcare providers may wish to consult the Northern New England Poison Center, which is available 24/7 to provide expert advice at 1-800-222-1222.
10. Clinicians should report all suspect cases of vaping-associated pulmonary illness to the Division of Public Health Services at 603-271-4496 (after hours 603-271-5300 and ask for the public health nurse on call).
11. A preliminary case report form has been developed (see attached) and can help guide clinicians in history taking to obtain appropriate information from suspect cases.

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Background

E-cigarettes are a diverse group of battery-powered devices that mimic the act of smoking by producing an aerosol by heating a liquid mixture containing nicotine and/or cannabis, flavorings, and other chemicals which are inhaled (called "vaping"). The aerosol that users inhale from devices can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including:

- Nicotine
- Ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- Flavoring such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease
- Volatile organic compounds
- Cancer-causing chemicals
- Heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead

E-cigarette use and vaping among youth and young adults is a major public health issue with e-cigarette use now the most commonly used tobacco product among youth. Almost a quarter (24%) of all high school aged adolescents in New Hampshire reported recently using electronic vapor products (the U.S. average is ~13%). Usage increases with increasing high-school grade level and by 12th grade, about 30% of high-school seniors in New Hampshire report using electronic vapor devices.

For additional information about e-cigarettes and vaping:

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/about-e-cigarettes.html.

For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please call Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at (603) 271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345, extension 4496 during business hours (8 am to 4:30 pm). For after hours or on weekends call the New Hampshire Hospital switchboard at 1-800-852-3345 extension 5300 and request the Public Health Professional on-call.

To change your contact information in the NH Health Alert Network, contact Adnela Alic at 603-271-7499 or email adnela.alic@dhhs.nh.gov.

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Originating Agency: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

Attachments:

1) Case Report Form