



# COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health

Administration      Clinic Services  
Behavioral Health      Emergency Medical Services      Public Health  
Environmental Health/Animal Services      Public Administrator/Public Guardian

*Nationally Accredited for Providing Quality Health Services*

## Health Advisory

August 19, 2019

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## Severe Acute Pulmonary Disease Associated with Cannabis or Cannabidiol Oil Vaping

*Remain on Alert for Potential Cases*

### **Current Situation**

Since June 2019, at least 7 cases of severe acute pulmonary disease in previously healthy adults were reported from a Kings County hospital. The patients presented with progressive respiratory distress, sometimes initially diagnosed with pneumonia or bronchitis, and some with preceding fevers and gastrointestinal symptoms. All patients reported vaping cannabis or CBC oils in the weeks prior to hospital admission. At this time, no infectious cause has been identified. All cases failed to respond to an initial course of antibiotic treatment. All patients required admission to the hospital with significant respiratory support, including high-flow oxygen, bilevel positive airway pressure (BIPAP), or intubation with mechanical ventilation. Patients have improved with systemic steroids. Other states have reported recent similar cases. The Kings County Health Department and the California Department of Public Health are investigating the cause of these illnesses.

### **Recommendations for Healthcare Providers**

- **Remain alert for potential cases.** Clinical and exposure criteria include:
  - Severe acute pulmonary disease (including but not limited to pneumonitis and ARDS);
  - Admission to a hospital and respiratory support (including but not limited to high-flow oxygen, BIPAP, or intubation with mechanical ventilation);
  - No infectious etiology defined;
  - Recent history of vaping; and
  - Symptom onset on or after June 1, 2019.

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**Health Alert:** Warrants immediate action or attention. **Health Advisory:** Provides information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action. **Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

- **Ask about vaping and obtain product, if available.**
  - Request information on the type of product, the brand name, and location where purchased.
  - If the patient has the product in hand, please collect. Keep product samples sealed and stored in a secure manner. Samples should be stored in the refrigerator in case there is microbial contaminant. Store samples upright in sealed plastic bags.
  - Ensure samples are labelled with documentation that allows for identification of the case patient from which they were obtained and hold all samples for the Monterey County Health Department.
- **Report suspect cases** to the Monterey County Health Department’s Communicable Disease Unit
  - During normal business hours call (831) 755-4521 or fax (831) 775-8076.
  - After business hours call (831) 755-5100 and ask for the Hazardous Materials Team, who will connect you with the on-call Health Officer.

***For Additional Information***

Please contact the Monterey County Health Department’s Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Division at (831) 755-4607 for additional information about the health risks of vaping.