



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

September 2019

Gotham Center
42-09 28th St.
Queens, NY 11101-4132

Dear New Yorkers,

On behalf of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, I want to alert you to a serious public health outbreak associated with e-cigarette use: As of Sept. 19, 2019, federal, state, and local health officials are investigating 530 possible lung illnesses related to e-cigarettes, mostly involving young people. This number includes 16 cases in New York City (NYC) and seven deaths in other states. All cases involved e-cigarette use.

The symptoms reported in the outbreak include:

- Coughing, shortness of breath or chest pain
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or abdominal pain
- Fever, fatigue or weight loss

E-cigarettes are devices that heat a liquid into aerosol (mist). When people use e-cigarettes (also called vaping), they inhale this aerosol. E-cigarettes can also be called vapes or vape pens. E-cigarette liquids do not contain tobacco but almost always contain nicotine, which is addictive, and flavors. E-cigarettes can also be used with cannabis (marijuana) and other substances.

No single substance, chemical or type of product has been linked to every case mentioned above. However, many of the cases seem to involve vaping cannabis products, such as THC oils. (THC is the active ingredient in cannabis.)

In response to this outbreak, the Health Department recommends New Yorkers stop vaping while the investigation is ongoing. If you are having difficulty stopping vaping, talk with your health care provider about strategies to cope with nicotine withdrawal. For adults who are trying to quit smoking, counseling and FDA-approved smoking cessation medications, such as nicotine medications (patch, gum, lozenge, spray and inhaler), are safe and effective ways to quit.

If you or someone you know continues vaping:

- Do not modify or add any substances to products that were not intended by the manufacturer.
- Use extreme caution with any cannabis vaping products, especially products purchased from the street or online.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you develop any of the symptoms listed above.



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

If you are a parent and your child has any of the symptoms listed above, seek immediate medical attention for your child. Talk to your children about the risks of e-cigarette use and the recent outbreak of vaping-related illnesses:

- Discuss the current high risks of vaping as the investigation continues.
- Answer questions about e-cigarettes while encouraging your children to talk with their friends about the risks of vaping.
- Share your concerns and acknowledge how hard it is to resist peer pressure.

For more information about e-cigarettes, visit nyc.gov/health or health.ny.gov and search for “e-cigarettes.” For more information about the outbreak, visit cdc.gov and search for “severe lung disease.”

Thank you for your help protecting our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oxiris Barbot, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner
New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene