



For Immediate Release:

August 26, 2019

Lung illness reported in teens and young adults who vape in several states

Little Rock, Ark. – The Arkansas Department of Health is warning Arkansans who use an electronic smoking device, e-cigarette, or vape about the risk of a potential lung illness.

Other states have reported over two hundred cases of a vaping-related lung disease and one death. The reports reach across the country, including Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Utah, California, and New York. Arkansas currently has four suspected cases under investigation. The products consumed could include a number of substances, including nicotine, flavorings, THC, synthetic cannabinoids, or a combination of these. Further investigation is ongoing to determine the possible cause of the illnesses by testing patients and vaping products.

Symptoms may include shortness of breath, chest pain, coughing, and fatigue. A few patients also reported fever, nausea, and diarrhea. The symptoms may worsen over days and weeks. Of the confirmed cases, all patients had vaped in the weeks and months leading up their hospitalization. People who experience any type of chest pain or difficulty breathing after vaping should seek medical attention.

“We are encouraging clinicians from across the state to reach out to ADH if they encounter patients with this illness and a history of vaping to help us better track, treat, and understand these illnesses,” said Dr. Appathurai Balamurugan (Dr. Bala), ADH Deputy Chief Medical Officer and State Chronic Disease Director. “We suspect there are cases that have not been reported yet.”

Vaping is still relatively new and the long-term side effects are still being researched. Nicotine commonly used in vapes is highly addictive. Vaping cartridges can contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. Nicotine harms the developing brain, which is not fully developed until a person is in their mid-20s. Vapes create substances that harm the body by producing tiny particles that can reach deep into the lungs.

Those interested in quitting tobacco and nicotine can call Be Well Arkansas at 833-283-WELL (9355). Wellness counselors help Arkansans quit tobacco through coaching and providing nicotine replacement therapy at no cost. The wellness counselors are available on weekdays Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

###