Arizona now officially part of a national vaping illness outbreak

Arizona confirms 3 cases of vaping-related respiratory illness

The Arizona Department of Health Services on Tuesday announced three probable vaping-related respiratory illnesses in Maricopa County. In all three cases, the patients were males in their 20s and were hospitalized. They have since been released from the hospital, according to information from state and Maricopa County health officials.

The department will continue to investigate other cases, said Chris Minnick, state Health Department spokesman.

The Arizona Republic previously had identified seven cases of suspected vaping-related respiratory illness ([story/news/local/arizona-health/2019/09/10/vaping-illness-arizona-health-officials-investigating-possible-cases/2264262001/]) with two Phoenix-area toxicologists.

The department has created a webpage where officials plan to post the latest information about the outbreak in Arizona: azhealth.gov/VapeOutbreak ([https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/vape-outbreak/index.php](https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/vape-outbreak/index.php))

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that, as of Sept. 11, there have been 380 probable or confirmed cases of respiratory illness related to vaping in 36 states and one U.S. territory. Six deaths have been confirmed in six states: California, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota and Oregon.
E-cigarettes are battery-powered, smokeless devices that heat a liquid that typically contains nicotine. The devices convert the liquid into a mist, which the users inhale. The exhale results in puffs of "vape" clouds that school officials say are prevalent in school bathrooms.

E-cigarettes are unsafe for kids, teenagers and young adults, the CDC says. The federal agency says that not only is nicotine highly addictive and potentially harmful to adolescent brain development, but e-cigarettes can contain other harmful substances besides nicotine.

State health officials say they are working with county health departments, medical providers and the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center to identify cases in the state.

"While this investigation is ongoing, we know there is no safe level of nicotine for children," Dr. Cara Christ, the Arizona Department of Health Services director, said in a written statement. "It's important that parents are talking to their children about the dangers associated with vape so they do not use these products. If your child has experimented with vaping and they are now experiencing any symptoms, please seek medical care immediately."


The CDC says patients have reported symptoms that include cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, fever or weight loss.

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News of the illnesses has resulted in a variety of impassioned reactions on social media, particularly from people who vape and say it is safer than using cigarettes. Some critics believe the illnesses are a result of using bootleg products containing a concentrated form of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the main psychoactive component of cannabis.

A spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Department of Public Health said in the local cases, the patients vaped products with nicotine and cannabinoids. Cannabinoids are the chemicals in marijuana and can include THC.

The investigation has not identified any specific substance or vape product that is linked to all cases. But vaping devices containing both nicotine and marijuana substances have been identified in the investigation. Some patients have reported that their symptoms developed over a few days, while others have reported their symptoms developed over several weeks.

To help prevent illness, state health officials advise:
- Consider not using vape products.
- Children should never use any vape device.
- Women who are pregnant should not use vape products.
- Do not modify a vape device or add any substances not intended by the manufacturer.
- If you do use vape and experience symptoms, seek medical care immediately.

Anyone who has concerns about being at risk for vaping-related respiratory illness can call the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Do you vape and want to share your experiences? Health-care reporter Stephanie Innes would like to hear from you. Reach her at Stephanie.Innes@gannett.com (mailto:stephanie.innes@gannett.com) or at 602-444-8369. Follow her on Twitter @stephanieinnes (https://twitter.com/stephanieinnes?lang=en)