

**Office of the
Chief Medical
Health Officer**

September 23, 2019

New Reporting Requirements for Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Vaping or Dabbing

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) has received reports of over 530 possible cases of severe pulmonary disease and 8 deaths associated with vaping¹ or dabbing², distributed across 38 states. Nearly three fourths (72%) of cases were male, two thirds (67%) of cases were 18 to 34 years old and 16% of cases were under 18 years and 17% are 35 years or older.

There are no cases reported thus far in British Columbia. To date, there is one suspect case, involving a youth who has since recovered, from London, Ontario. Three other possible cases are being investigated in Canada at this time.

The time interval between exposure (vaping or dabbing) and symptoms ranges from a few days to a few weeks. No single substance or e-cigarette product has been consistently associated with illness.

Presenting symptoms have included cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea) and non-specific constitutional symptoms (fever, fatigue, weight loss). Signs have included hypoxemia, fever, and tachycardia.

Chest imaging may show bilateral pulmonary infiltrates or the appearance of ground glass opacities. Cases have been sufficiently severe such that supplemental oxygen, assisted ventilation, and intubation have been required. Gastrointestinal symptoms have sometimes preceded respiratory symptoms.

To monitor for occurrences of and risk factors for this clinical entity associated with vaping or dabbing in BC the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has issued a Notice (enclosed). Health care providers now will be under a duty to report to an Island Health Medical Health Officer cases of people experiencing severe pulmonary disease with no evidence of alternative plausible diagnoses other than vaping or dabbing and all related information.

Please contact an Island Health MHO if you have a patient who meets the following criteria with signs and symptoms onset on or after June 1, 2019:

- 1. Reports vaping or dabbing using e-cigarette devices, related products or other means of inhaling a variety of products in the 90 days before symptom onset, AND**
- 2. Who has pulmonary infiltrates on X-ray imaging, AND**
- 3. Whose illness has not been able to be attributed to other causes.**

The MHO can be reached during business hours at the numbers listed on the left of this page and after hours via the Island Health MHO On-call number: 1.800.204.6166.

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**After Hours On Call
1.800.204.6166**

When you contact the Medical Health Officer, please be prepared to provide the following information

- Name and contact information of the reporting physician or NP
- Date of the report
- First name of patient
- Last name of patient
- Personal Health Number of patient
- Phone number of patient
- Sex of patient
- Date of Birth of patient
- Date of patient's symptoms onset
- Name of hospital or clinic where patient assessed and/or admitted

A more detailed description and up to date case definitions for both probable and confirmed cases can be found at:

US CDC – "[Outbreak of Lung Disease Associated with E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping](#)"

US CDC – "[Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Electronic-Cigarette-Product Use – Interim Guidance](#)"

US CDC- <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00421.asp?deliveryName=DM8038>

Information regarding vaping and cannabis use and support for persons who wish to seek treatment can be found at:

BC Gov – [Health Link BC – Vaping Information](#) BC

Gov – [Health Link BC – Cannabis Information](#)

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact your Medical Health Officer for your area.



Richard S. Stanwick, MD MSc FRCPC FAAP
Chief Medical Health Officer

¹ Vaping includes the use of electronic devices that can vaporize a combination of nicotine, flavors, and/or other substances (e.g. marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), THC concentrates, cannabidiol (CBD), synthetic cannabinoids) for inhalation. Examples of these devices include electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes, such as JUUL, SMOK, Suorin, Vuse, or blu. They are also known as vapes, mods, e-cigs, e-hookahs, vape-pens, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) or another electronic vapor producing product.

² Dabbing is the process of heating concentrated doses of cannabis on a hot surface, usually a nail, and then inhaled through a dab rig. Concentrated doses of cannabis are made by extracting THC, CBD and other cannabinoids using a solvent like butane or carbon dioxide, resulting in sticky oils also commonly referred to as wax, shatter, budder, and butane hash oil.