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 Oct. 22, 2019, federal, state and local health officials are investigating over 1,604 possible cases of lung injury related to e-cigarettes, mostly involving young people. This number includes 31 cases and one death in New York City (NYC) and 34 deaths nationwide. 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, most 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.
- New Yorkers trying to quit vaping or smoking can also visit nysmokefree.com or call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487) to talk to a quit coach and ask about eligibility for a free starter kit of medications.
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 through informal or social networks. Products that appear to be from licensed retailers in other states may be counterfeit or unregulated (for example, “Dank Vapes” or “Exotic Carts”). The contents of cartridges may not match the label and may vary.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you develop any of the symptoms listed above.

If you are a certified patient in the Medical Marijuana Program:

- Talk with your health care provider about potential alternatives to vaping products while the investigation continues.
- For additional information, contact the state’s Medical Marijuana Program at 844-863-9312.

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 lung injury:

- Discuss the current high risks of vaping as the investigation continues.
- Answer questions about e-cigarettes while encouraging an open, ongoing conversation.
- 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 injury.

Thank you for your help protecting our communities.

Sincerely,

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