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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist
Subject: **Vaping-associated Pulmonary Illness – Reporting Now Required; Update – Maine, 2019**
Date / Time: Thursday, October 3, 2019 at 9:30am
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Abstract:

The purpose of this health advisory is to inform clinicians that, effective immediately, and pursuant to 22 M.R.S. §802(1)(B), pulmonary disease associated with e-cigarette use is now temporarily added to the list of Notifiable Conditions that are required to be reported to Maine CDC.

Summary: There has been an increase in the number of cases of significant lung illness related to e-cigarette use in Maine. As of Wednesday, October 2, four additional cases of lung illness related to e-cigarette use have been confirmed, bringing Maine's total to five cases. No deaths from this illness have been reported in Maine.

Recommendations: Consider e-cigarette-associated illness with patients who present with respiratory illness of unclear etiology and who have vaped or dabbled within the past 90 days. Clinicians should ask about and document extent of use, type of instrument used, type of vaping liquid used (i.e. nicotine, THC), place of purchase, and if the patient still has the vaping liquid they used. Clinicians should also complete a respiratory viral panel and test for influenza to rule out a possible viral cause of illness.

Reporting: Clinicians should report cases with onset on or after May 1, 2019, that meet the criteria of (1) significant respiratory illness of unclear etiology and (2) a history of vaping. All suspect cases should be reported by phone to Maine CDC's 24/7 disease reporting and consultation line at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax to 1-800-293-7534 using the [Disease Reporting Form](#) (attached).

Attention: On October 9, 2019, Maine CDC will be hosting a live webinar to discuss pulmonary illness associated with e-cigarette use. More information to follow.

Vaping-associated Pulmonary Illness – Reporting Now Required

The purpose of this health advisory is to inform clinicians that, effective immediately, and pursuant to 22 M.R.S. §802(1)(B), pulmonary disease associated with e-cigarette use is now temporarily added to the list of Notifiable Conditions that are required to be reported to Maine CDC.

Summary of Maine cases: This health advisory is also to alert clinicians to an increase in the number of cases of significant lung illness related to e-cigarette use in Maine. As of Tuesday October 1, four additional cases of lung illness related to e-cigarette use have been confirmed, bringing Maine’s total to five cases.

Similar cases have been reported in 45 other states and one U.S. territory. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 12 deaths in 10 states and more than 800 hospitalizations have been attributed to severe lung illness associated with e-cigarette use, as of September 26, 2019. Symptoms have included cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, fever, and abdominal pain. Some patients experienced progressive respiratory compromise requiring mechanical ventilation but subsequently improved with corticosteroids. All patients reported “vaping” (i.e., use of e-cigarette devices to aerosolize substances for inhalation) in the weeks and months prior to hospital admission. Many have acknowledged recent use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products.

No deaths from this illness have been reported in Maine. The cases in Maine involve patients who all exhibited symptoms similar to those identified in other states. Symptoms have included cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, fever, and fatigue.

No specific e-cigarette product or substance is linked to all cases. As in other states, most Maine patients reported a history of using e-cigarette products or smoking materials containing THC, the active ingredient in cannabis. Other patients reported using both THC and nicotine, while a third group reported using e-cigarettes containing only nicotine.

Recommendations for Clinicians: In evaluating patients with significant respiratory illness and a history of vaping or dabbing, consider e-cigarette-associated illness with patients who present with respiratory illness of unclear etiology and who have vaped or dabbled within the past 90 days. Where the cause of respiratory illness is unclear and there is a patient history of vaping or dabbing, clinicians should ask about and document the following:

- extent of use,
- type of instrument used,
- type of vaping liquid used (i.e., nicotine, THC),
- place of purchase, and
- if the patient still has the vaping liquid they used. (Maine CDC can assist with arranging laboratory testing of the liquid.)

Given the start of flu season, clinicals should also complete a respiratory viral panel and a test for influenza to rule out viral causes of illness.

Reporting: Maine CDC requires that clinicians report cases that meet the criteria of (1) significant respiratory illness of unclear etiology and (2) a history of vaping in the past 90 days. All suspect cases should be reported by phone to Maine CDC’s 24/7 disease reporting and consultation line at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax to 1-800-293-7534 using the [Disease Reporting Form](#).