



# SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

## Press Release

### Severe Lung Injuries Associated with Vaping

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**San Benito County**-A Health Alert has been issued for lung injuries related to vaping cannabis, cannabis oils or nicotine products in San Benito County after the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a statewide Health Alert. There are currently no cases of vaping-related lung illness reported in the County, however Health Officer, Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, has requested local clinicians to watch for symptoms, inquire about use of vaping products, and report any suspected cases.

Since June, 36 cases of vaping-associated lung illness requiring hospitalization were reported in California. In Kings County, located in California's Central Valley region, seven patients experienced trouble breathing that worsened after an initial diagnosis of pneumonia or bronchitis. Those patients reported vaping cannabis or cannabis-based oils in the weeks prior to hospital admission and failed to respond to antibiotic treatment. Medical tests for infectious disease were negative.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating 193 potential cases of severe lung illness associated with e-cigarette product use reported by 22 states, including California, over the past three months. One death has been confirmed in Illinois.

The use of electronic cigarettes, commonly known as "vaping", involves inhaling an aerosol into the lungs. The devices come in many forms, but all use a battery to heat up liquids typically containing nicotine and chemical flavorings, but which can also be used to consume drugs such as cannabis.

Most patients nationwide report vaping the cannabis compounds THC and/or cannabidiol (CBD), and some also report vaping nicotine products. The exact cause of the illnesses is currently unknown. The Health Alert requests clinicians to report similar cases to the San Benito County Public Health Services and collect associated vaping products for testing.

"Although the Health Alert document is for clinicians, we want all residents and visitors in San Benito County to be aware of these serious lung injuries. Much is unknown about the risks of vaping, and it has even been touted as a harm-reduction method, which has likely increased its popularity as a perceived safer alternative to cigarettes. As we learn more about the cause of these injuries, I urge individuals to seriously consider quitting the use of vaping products," said Marty Fenstersheib, MD, MPH, San Benito County Public Health Officer.

Although there are currently no San Benito County cases, usage trends are alarming. In 2018, more than one in four 11th graders in San Benito County reported vaping on a regular basis, a seven percent increase from the 2016 rate.

For help quitting vaping or smoking call California's Helpline at [1-800-No-Butts](tel:1-800-No-Butts) or visit [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov). For more information on vaping, please call Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367 or go to our website at <http://hhsa.cosb.us/>.

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