Report Possible Cases of Vaping-associated Pulmonary Illness

Key Message
The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) urges clinicians to report any possible cases of severe pulmonary illness potentially associated with vaping.

Key Facts

- Patients are reportedly presenting with respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Symptoms worsened over a period of days or weeks before admission to the hospital. Other symptoms reported by some patients included fever, abdominal pain, weight loss, nausea, and diarrhea. Chest radiographs showed bilateral opacities.
- Some patients experienced progressive respiratory compromise requiring mechanical ventilation but subsequently improved with steroids.
- Most patients reported “vaping” (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 while speaking with healthcare personnel or in follow-up interviews by health department staff; however, no specific product has been identified by all cases, nor has any product been conclusively linked to this clinical syndrome.

When patients present with respiratory or pulmonary illness, especially of unclear etiology, clinicians should ask about the use of e-cigarette products (devices, liquids, refill pods, and/or cartridges) for “vaping.” If possible, inquire about the types of drugs used and methods of drug use (smoking, “vaping”).

Ask patient about any retained product, including devices and liquids, in order to ascertain availability for possible testing to be coordinated by ADPH.

Report all presumptive diagnoses within 24 hours.

- To report complete the ADPH REPORT Card, https://epiweb.adph.state.al.us/redcap/surveys/?s=H37ENP8ADD.
- Select “Case of public health importance” in the Reportable Disease/Health Condition section.
- If you have questions pertaining to the REPORT Card call 1-866-264-4073 (24/7/365).