



News Release

For Immediate Release

Monday, September 9, 2019

MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES ADVISORY ON VAPING & E-CIGARETTES

In light of [advisories](#) issued by New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker and [warnings](#) from the CDC, **Dr. Michael D. Mendoza**, Monroe County Commissioner of Public Health, is urging all residents of Monroe County to stop using all vape products until the investigation into the definitive cause of reported vaping-associated illnesses nationwide is concluded.

According to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), as of September 5, 2019, NYSDOH has received 34 reports from New York State physicians of severe pulmonary illness among patients ranging from 15 to 46 years of age who were using at least one cannabis-containing vape product before they became ill. However, all patients reported recent use of various vape products.

“Due to the nationwide trend of severe pulmonary disease associated with e-cigarette products, I am urging county residents to stop using vape/e-cigarette products,” said **Mendoza**. *“In addition to this emerging trend of pulmonary disease, we know that these products represent a real health risk to young people as the nicotine within these products is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development. Until more information is available locally, we will continue to monitor findings issued by Wadsworth, the New York State’s public health laboratory, and further advisories issued by the NYS Department of Health and the CDC.”*

According to NYSDOH, laboratory test results showed very high levels of vitamin E acetate in nearly all cannabis-containing samples analyzed by the Wadsworth Center as part of this investigation. At least one vitamin E acetate containing vape product has been linked to each patient who submitted a product for testing. Vitamin E acetate is not an approved additive for New York State Medical Marijuana Program-authorized vape products and was not seen in the nicotine-based products that were tested.

As a result, vitamin E acetate is now a key focus of the NYSDOH investigation of potential causes of vaping-associated pulmonary illnesses. Vitamin E acetate is a commonly available nutritional supplement that is not known to cause harm when ingested as a vitamin supplement or applied to the skin. However, the NYSDOH continues to investigate its health effects when inhaled because its oil-like properties could be associated with the observed symptoms.

Regardless of the ongoing investigation, the Monroe County Department of Public Health recommends the following guidance per the CDC:

- [Youth and young adults should not use e-cigarette products.](#)
- [Women who are pregnant should not use e-cigarette products.](#)

PAGE 2 - MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES ADVISORY ON VAPING & E-CIGARETTES

- Adults who do not currently use tobacco products should not start using e-cigarette products.
- If you do use e-cigarette products, you should not buy these products off the street (for example, e-cigarette products with THC or other cannabinoids).
- You should not modify e-cigarette products or add any substances to these products that are not intended by the manufacturer.
- Adult smokers who are attempting to quit should use evidence-based treatments, including counseling and FDA-approved medications. If you need help quitting tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, contact your doctor or other medical provider.

Data from the Monroe County Department of Public Health's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of youth who reported ever using a vape product/e-cigarette increased from 31% to 35%. During the same time period, the proportion who reported using a vape product in the last 30 days increased from 20% to 23%. The full report can be viewed at <https://www2.monroecounty.gov/files/health/DataReports/Monroe%20County%20YRBS%202019.pdf>

The Monroe County Department of Public Health has visited many local school districts in recent years to educate parents, teachers, and students on the risks of e-cigarette use. Additionally, Monroe County contracts with local police departments to conduct Retail Tobacco Dealer compliance checks throughout Monroe County using underage youth who attempt to purchase tobacco products. If a sale is made the Monroe County Department of Public Health issues an enforcement action against the Retail Tobacco Dealers found in violation of NYS Public Health Law Article 13-F (Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act) for the sale of tobacco and/or vaping products to an underage youth during a compliance check.

The minimum fine for the first violation is \$300 (plus a \$50 surcharge). Repeat violations can result in fines of up to \$2500 and the suspension or revocation of lottery and/or tobacco licenses.

If you are concerned about your health after using an e-cigarette product, you can also call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.

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