

Cases of lung injury tied to vaping keep rising

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(HealthDay News)—Chance Ammirata was a vaper for almost two

years. But three weeks ago, the 18-year-old began to have trouble breathing.

"I would say my chest felt like it was collapsing and tightening up, and I couldn't breathe," he told *CBS News*. After going to the emergency room, doctors told him his right [lung](#) had a hole in it and they would have to put a chest tube in immediately. Two days later, a surgeon repaired the hole.

Ammirata believes his vaping was the culprit behind his collapsed lung, and he has since started a social media campaign called #LungLove to convince other teens to throw away their [e-cigarettes](#).

"I decided that spreading my story could help others not have to go through the same thing as me," he explained on his Instagram account.

Ammirata is not the only American to have landed in the hospital with vaping-related lung troubles recently.

Late Wednesday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its tally of such cases to 153, spread across 16 states. These cases have emerged in a relatively short timeframe—from June 28 through Aug. 20, the agency said in a statement.

Cases have so far been recorded in California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin, the CDC said.

No age group is immune: E-cigarette users ranging from teenagers to middle-aged adults are falling ill with respiratory symptoms that include coughing, shortness of breath and fatigue.

Some patients have had so much trouble breathing that they wound up on a ventilator in their hospital's intensive care unit (ICU), said Dr. Albert Rizzo, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association.

Public health officials in Wisconsin, Illinois, California, New York, Indiana and New Jersey are tracking the most cases, *CNN* reported.

"We do have to be careful [to say] that this has not been linked to any specific device, or any specific chemical that might exist in a device," the ALA's Rizzo said. "The commonality is it's mainly young people who've supposedly been vaping who ended up having respiratory symptoms."

The respiratory symptoms appear to be caused by inflammation that causes the lungs to fill with fluid, said Dr. Karen Wilson, vice chair of clinical and translational research for the Jack and Lucy Clark Department of Pediatrics at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, in New York City.

Testing shows that the inflammation is not caused by an infection, leading doctors to seek another explanation for lung irritation, Wilson and Rizzo said.

Wilson first became aware of these cases a month ago, when the teenage son of a family friend wound up in the ICU with lung injuries possibly linked to vaping.

The 17-year-old is improving, and his prognosis is good, Wilson said.

"In general, I think kids are recovering from this, but it's hard to say if there's going to be any long-term risk of lung injury or asthma or other illness," Wilson said.

The CDC recently put out a statement urging doctors to report all possible cases of vaping-associated lung illness to state or local health officials.

E-cigarette vapor contains many ingredients that could cause lung irritation, such as ultrafine particles, oil, and heavy metals like nickel, tin and lead, Rizzo said.

Flavored vapor also can contain diacetyl, a chemical linked to a condition called "popcorn lung," Rizzo noted. The condition is so named because more than a decade ago workers in a microwave popcorn factory developed lung ailments after breathing in butter-flavored diacetyl.

In popcorn lung, the tiny air sacs in the lungs become scarred, resulting in the thickening and narrowing of the airways, the American Lung Association explained.

There's also the possibility that heavy levels of nicotine are affecting the lungs, Rizzo added.

"One of the more common e-cigarettes contains as much nicotine in a pod as in a whole pack of cigarettes," Rizzo said. "It's very hard to smoke a pack of cigarettes in 15 minutes. You can ingest a whole pod by vaping in 15 minutes."

In its Wednesday statement, the CDC also noted that recent marijuana use could be a factor.

"In many cases, patients have acknowledged recent use of tetrahydrocannabinol [THC]-containing products while speaking to health care personnel or in follow-up interviews by health department staff," the agency said. THC is the chemical in pot that gives users a

high.

Wilson believes that parents should make sure their teenagers aren't vaping, and also refrain from vaping in the presence of kids, to prevent secondhand exposure.

"Particularly for adolescents and young adults, they should not have access to these products and they should not use them," Wilson said. "This is more evidence they're not a safe product for teenagers and young adults."

More information: The American Lung Association has more about [e-cigarettes and popcorn lung](#).

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