

Investigation solidifies role of vitamin E in vaping lung injuries

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Lab tests performed in Minnesota on illicit THC vaping products have solidified the role of vitamin E acetate in an outbreak of severe lung injuries among e-cigarette users across the nation this year.

The tests found vitamin E in illicit vaping products that were seized by Minnesota law enforcement agencies in 2019, at the height of the outbreak—but not in products seized in 2018, before the outbreak, the Minnesota Department of Health reported Tuesday.

The state's findings were circulated nationally Tuesday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which has monitored the outbreak nationally and has reported 2,290 cases of vaping-associated lung injuries this year and 47 related deaths.

"We now have evidence of vitamin E acetate in the lungs of Minnesotans and in illicit THC products from Minnesota during the outbreak," said Jan Malcolm, state health commissioner. "We have more work ahead, but every bit of evidence gets us closer to a resolution."

Minnesota has reported 125 confirmed or probable cases, including three deaths and multiple cases in which otherwise young, healthy people required intensive care and mechanical breathing assistance for treatment.

Vitamin E came under suspicion after it was discovered in fluid samples from the lungs of injured patients. Health officials have speculated that vitamin E was added to illicit vaping products this year as a thickener or to dilute the concentration of THC, the psychoactive component of marijuana.

The acetate was found in all 20 products seized by law enforcement agencies in Minnesota in 2019, but in zero of the 10 products seized in 2018. It also was found in samples of illicit THC vaping products provided to state health authorities by 11 of 12 lung-injured patients.

State [health officials](#) said the finding is preliminary, and based on a small number of product samples, and that other compounds could be

playing a role in the lung injuries.

State and federal [health authorities](#) now discourage the use of all illicit THC vaping products. Children, [young adults](#) and pregnant women are discouraged from vaping any products, including legal nicotine forms.

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