

Illinois patient's death may be first in US tied to vaping

August 23 2019, by Don Babwin



In this Tuesday, April 10, 2018 photo, Marshfield High School Principal Robert Keuther displays vaping devices that were confiscated from students in such places as restrooms or hallways at the school in Marshfield, Mass. Illinois health officials are reporting what could be United States' first death tied to vaping. In a Friday, Aug. 23, 2019, news release, the Illinois Department of Public Health says a person who recently vaped died after being hospitalized with "severe respiratory illness." The agency didn't give any other information about the patient, including a name or where the person lived. (AP Photo/Steven Senne,

File)

Illinois health officials said Friday that a patient who contracted a serious lung disease after vaping has died, which could make it the first death in the United States linked to the smoking alternative that has become popular with teens and young adults.

The Illinois Department of Public Health said in a news release that the patient, who was between 17 and 38 years old, had been hospitalized after falling ill following vaping, though it didn't give other information about the person, including the patient's name, hometown or date of death.

On Wednesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a news release in which it said 149 people nationwide had contracted a severe respiratory illness after vaping, but that there hadn't been any deaths reported as of then. CDC officials didn't immediately reply to a Friday phone message seeking comment.

The Illinois agency said in its release that the number of people who contracted a respiratory illness after vaping had doubled in the past week, to 22.

"The severity of illness people are experiencing is alarming and we must get the word out that using e-cigarettes and vaping can be dangerous," IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike said in the release. "We requested a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help us investigate these cases and they arrived in Illinois on Tuesday."

All of the illnesses reported by the CDC were in teens or adults who had used an electronic cigarette or some other kind of vaping device.

Doctors say the illnesses resemble an inhalation injury, with the lungs apparently reacting to a caustic substance. So far, infectious diseases have been ruled out.

Health officials around the country have been reporting patients getting sick after vaping, two in Connecticut, four in Iowa and six in Ohio that were announced Friday. They are asking doctors and hospitals to tell state health officials about any possible vaping-related lung disease cases they encounter.

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