

US billionaire Bloomberg pledges \$160m to fight vaping

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At least five people have died in the US after vaping

Billionaire and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg on Tuesday announced a \$160 million campaign to ban flavored e-cigarettes in the United States following a spike in vaping deaths.

At least five people have died in the US recently after [vaping](#) in an outbreak that has sickened hundreds with severe pulmonary disease and left several teenagers in induced comas.

"This is an urgent health crisis, and [tobacco companies](#) are behind it," said Bloomberg, a long-time anti-smoking activist who banned smoking in New York bars and restaurants when he was mayor in the early 2000s.

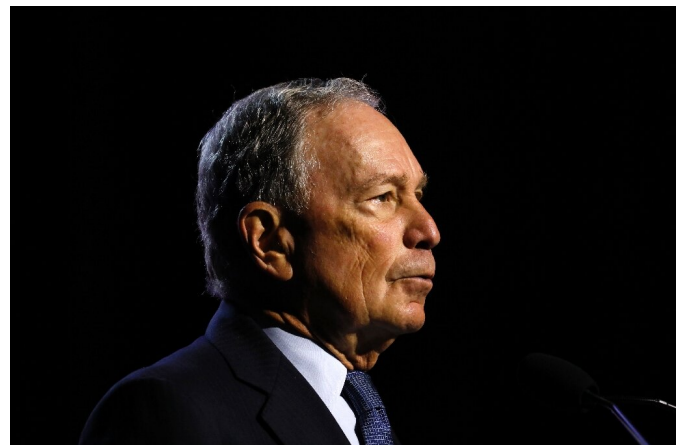
"We know Big Tobacco's playbook. We've seen this before. It is targeting kids—and putting them in serious danger," he added in the New York Times op-ed co-written with Matt Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Bloomberg denounced the inaction of the Food

and Drug Administration (FDA) and said the money would be spent helping at least 20 cities and states ban all flavored tobacco and e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes have been available in the US since 2006 and are sometimes used as an aid to quit smoking traditional tobacco products like cigarettes.

Their use among adolescents has skyrocketed in recent years: some 3.6 million middle and [high school students](#) used vaping products in 2018, an increase of 1.5 million on the year before.



Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York, is funding a campaign to ban flavored e-cigarettes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Friday that there were now more than 450 possible cases of pulmonary illness associated with vaping in the US, double the figure reported the previous week.

The CDC cautioned against vaping as officials investigate the precise cause of the deaths. No single substance has been found to be present in all the laboratory samples being examined.

New York's health department found very high levels of vitamin E oil in cannabis cartridges used by all 34 people in the state who had fallen ill after using e-cigarettes.

Vitamin E is a commonly used nutritional supplement but is dangerous when inhaled.

San Francisco, the home of market leader Juul Labs, became the first American city to ban e-cigarettes in June last year.

The FDA has warned JUUL to stop advertising itself as a less harmful alternative to smoking, noting in particular the company's attempts to attract young people.

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