

Lung Injuries Increase Risk of Severe Illness, Complications, and Respiratory Failure

(Newark, NJ) – The State's Poison Control Center recently consulted on three new cases of vaping-associated lung injury, reminding us that COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) is not the only respiratory-related health issue affecting New Jersey residents.

Our state's healthcare system finds itself at the crossroads of two novel public health crisis — the global COVID-19 pandemic and the national e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury (EVALI) [epidemic](#). Both crises cause severe respiratory injury, illness or death while leaving many unknowns and much uncertainty. It's important for the public to be aware that smoking and vape-related lung injuries is an underlying medical condition that can cause individuals to be more susceptible to respiratory infections like influenza (flu), and COVID-19.

"Healthcare and public health professionals find themselves in uncharted waters as they navigate patient care during co-existing, novel health crises that exhibit overlapping respiratory signs and symptoms," says Diane Calello, MD, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#)'s Department of Emergency Medicine. "It's important to consider that respiratory failure may be the result of vaping-associated lung injury and not just COVID-19."

"We know that both [COVID-19](#) and vaping can severely affect the respiratory system, damaging lung tissue," says Lewis Nelson, MD, chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. "These effects may be permanent and significantly increase one's risk for severe illness, pneumonia and other complications, or death."

Although there is still much to learn about the health consequences of vaping nicotine, marijuana, and other products, some things are fairly clear — vaping affects both short-term and long-term health, similar to combustible tobacco products (e.g., cigarettes). E-cigarette or vape aerosol contain harmful chemicals that damage tissue and cells throughout the body, specifically your respiratory system. Damaging the delicate tissue and cells of the lungs leads to devastating health outcomes such as increased risk for severe respiratory infections and illness, inflammation, decreased immune response, compromised lung capacity and function, and respiratory failure.

If you have questions, concerns or an emergency regarding vape-associated lung injury, contact your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. Poison Center experts are specialized health professionals (doctors, nurses, and pharmacists) available 24/7 to assist the general public or healthcare professionals. Services are free and confidential; callers have free access to a language line/interpretation service. New Jersey residents can reach their poison center in the following ways: Call (1-800-222-1222), Text (973-339-0702), or [Chat](#) via our website. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Are you a New Jersey resident looking for information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)? Access help, 24/7 — Call **2-1-1**; Call **1-800-962-1253** (Coronavirus Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center);

Text: **NJCOVID** to **898-211**; Website: <https://covid19.nj.gov/>

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

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