

# Massachusetts public health officials announce third death from a vaping-associated lung injury

A third person has died of a vaping-associated lung injury, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today. The patient, a man in his 50s from Worcester County, reported vaping both nicotine and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), an ingredient found in marijuana. The patient is among more than 200 suspected vaping-associated lung injury patients that have been reported to DPH since September when Massachusetts clinicians were mandated to report any unexplained lung injury in a patient with a history of vaping to the department.

Since the state began mandating the reporting of vaping-associated lung injuries on September 11, DPH has received 220 reports from clinicians of suspected vaping-associated lung injuries, 127 of which meet the criteria for investigation by DPH. Ninety-five investigations have been completed and 21 confirmed and 47 probable cases have been reported to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). DPH will report this third confirmed death from a vaping-associated lung injury to the CDC next week.

Last month, DPH reported the state's first two deaths from a vaping-associated lung injury, a woman in her 40s from Middlesex County and a woman in her 60s from Hampshire County, both of whom vaped nicotine.

"My condolences go out to the family of this patient who has died from a vaping-associated lung injury," said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. "This disease is serious and potentially fatal and we are continuing to

investigate the cause.”

Governor Baker declared a public health emergency on September 24 and temporarily banned the sale of vaping products and devices, in response to the growing number of cases of severe lung injuries associated with the use of e-cigarettes and cannabis and nicotine vaping products in Massachusetts and nationally.

Massachusetts clinicians are asked to report to DPH any individual experiencing otherwise unexplained progressive symptoms of shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, cough, or weight loss, of any severity, and an abnormal chest imaging study, who also report vaping within 90 days before the onset of symptoms.

In an updated DPH clinical advisory sent this week to Massachusetts clinicians, those who identify a patient with vaping-associated lung injury should ask the patient to retain any vaping material including the device and any partially used vaping product. Patients determined to be confirmed or probable cases will be contacted to see if their products meet the criteria for testing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Of the 68 Massachusetts confirmed or probable cases that have been reported to the CDC, 31 are male and 37 are female. Fifty percent are under the age of 30 and 50 percent are 30 or older. Thirty-one percent of the people vaped only nicotine, 38 percent vaped only THC, and 25 percent reported vaping nicotine and THC. DPH’s online dashboard provides detailed information on vaping cases that DPH has reported to the CDC. It is updated each Wednesday.

As a result of the vaping ban, the Commonwealth has implemented a statewide standing order for over-the-counter nicotine replacement products that allow adults to access products like gum, lozenges, and patches as a covered benefit

through their insurance without requiring an individual prescription. The Massachusetts Smoker's Helpline (1-800-QUIT NOW) has doubled free over-the-counter nicotine replacement products from four weeks to eight weeks, once a person receives counseling by phone.

Individuals who are vaping are encouraged to call the Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [makingsmokinghistory.org](http://makingsmokinghistory.org) or [Mass.gov/QuitVaping](http://Mass.gov/QuitVaping) to connect to treatment.