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Riverside County health officer urges e-cigarette users to stop amid concerns over lung illness

Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser is urging those who use vaping products to stop until health officials can determine the cause of a respiratory illness that has affected hundreds of people across the country, including at least five in Riverside County.

There have been five deaths associated with the ailment nationwide, including one from Los Angeles County announced last week. More than 450 cases have been reported throughout the U.S.

Kaiser's recommendation mirrors that of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is spearheading a national investigation into the issue. Kaiser said those who use e-cigarettes as a way to stop smoking should speak to their primary care provider for guidance on whether to continue.

"Until we figure this out, if you don't need to vape, don't," said Dr. Kaiser. "We don't understand what's causing this yet."

In Riverside County, the pulmonary disease patients range in age from 15 to 50 and all have been hospitalized at some point. Some are now recovering at home. No clear pattern has emerged so far about what they were using to vape or the use of cannabis.

According to the CDC, patients in this investigation have reported symptoms such as:

- Cough, shortness of breath, or chest pain.
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Fatigue, fever, or weight loss.

The CDC reports that some patients have indicated that their symptoms developed over a few days, while others have reported that their symptoms developed over several weeks. A pulmonary infection does not appear to be causing the symptoms, which have generally not improved with antibiotic treatment alone.

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