

Vaping Related Lung Injury

Important advice for Australian vapers

The outbreak of serious lung injuries in the US and Canada is almost certainly due to vaping black-market THC (cannabis) oils rather than nicotine e-liquid.

This pattern of this outbreak is typical of what occurs when a bad batch of illegal drugs hits the streets: the sudden appearance of clusters of acute poisoning, initially in localised areas and especially in young people.

Black-market THC (cannabis) oils

- The vast majority of victims have used black-market THC oils in a vapouriser
- Some black-market suppliers have started adding vitamin E acetate oil (tocopherol acetate) as a 'cutting' and thickening agent. Other oils have also been found in THC vape cartridges
- Other contaminants such as pesticides have also been identified and may also be harmful
- When oils are inhaled, they cause severe lung inflammation, for example lipoid pneumonia
- Almost all victims used pre-filled THC 'carts' or cartridges (pictured), purchased on the black-market
- The illicit supply chain has been identified for some of these products and dealers are being arrested.



Could nicotine vaping be the cause?

- Millions of people worldwide have been vaping nicotine in propylene glycol (PG) and vegetable glycerine (VG) for over a decade without similar outbreaks
- Nicotine e-liquids are water-soluble and are not oils. Propylene glycol and vegetable glycerine are alcohols, not oils.
- No contaminated nicotine e-liquids have been found on testing
- A recent comprehensive review of nicotine vaping found no evidence of any serious lung harm from short to medium term use (Polosa 2019)

Advice for Australian vapers



Do not be alarmed by misleading media reports.

- The healthiest option is not to smoke or vape
- Non-smokers should not start vaping
- If you are vaping to avoid relapse to smoking, do not go back to smoking
- The full risks of long-term vaping are unknown, but are likely to be much less than the risks of smoking
- The safest option for your long-term health is to quit vaping if you can. You can always return to vaping if you are worried that you may start smoking again.
- Always purchase your e-liquid from a reputable supplier
- Avoid all black-market vaping liquids

References and more information at www.athra.org.au/blog