

Early response to a multi-state outbreak of e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) -- Wisconsin, 2019

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During July 2019, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) was alerted to a series of severe respiratory illnesses among previously healthy teenagers who all reported using e-cigarette products, or vaping, prior to their illnesses. These reports turned out to be just the beginning of a public health crisis that would sicken over 2,500 people across the U.S. and over 100 people in Wisconsin. Efforts to interview patients about their vaping practices and test vaping product ultimately led to the conclusion that vitamin E acetate, a cutting agent used in illicit-market THC products, was the most likely culprit of the outbreak. As the first state to investigate cases of vaping-associated lung injury, Wisconsin had a unique role in describing the outbreak, shedding light on the possible causes, and developing the methods and communication strategies to address this high-profile and novel public health threat.