

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Don't Overlook Vaping-Associated Lung Injuries Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic 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!

Stay Connected: Facebook ([@NJPIES](#)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](#)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

Real People. Real Answers.

Available for Media Interviews

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers NJ Medical School

About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It is designated as the state's regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; [Chat](#). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Website](#)

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: njms.rutgers.edu.