



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Kings County Department of Public Health

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## Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome - Vaping FAQ's

Dr. Milton Teske, Health Officer, with the Kings County Department of Public Health is issuing a warning of the dangers of vaping cannabis or CBD oils. Since June, seven cases of Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) have been identified requiring hospitalization and respiratory support among previously healthy adults. Some of these patients' conditions were so severe they were admitted to the intensive care unit, and required respiratory support through mechanical devices.

The first symptoms of ARDS are feeling like you can't get enough air into your lungs, rapid breathing, and a low blood oxygen level, low blood pressure, confusion, and extreme tiredness. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms seek immediate medical treatment.

A reported common exposure among these patients is that they have been vaping cannabis or CBD oils. At this time, no infectious cause has been identified.

One pattern also observed during our investigation is that all of the cases so far have purchased their vape cartridges from "pop-up shops". Pop-up shops are temporary shops that open for an undetermined amount of time, advertise by word of mouth, and will move locations frequently. Given the way they operate they are not likely licensed distributors and do not follow any current regulations or safety practices. Under no circumstances should you vape cannabis or CBD oils obtained from a "pop-up shop".

Although cannabis or CBD oil use is legal in California, if you are going to use cannabis or CBD oil or a combination of both, *be cautious*, and only purchase from a reputable distributor.

The Kings County Department of Public Health has partnered with the California Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and Food and Drug Administration for continued investigation and surveillance.

For more information on cannabis or vaping uses go to:

<http://bit.do/letstalkcannabis>

[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/about-e-cigarettes.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/about-e-cigarettes.html)

1. **What is ARDS?** Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) is a serious reaction to direct and/or indirect lung injury. It is characterized by inflammation of lung tissue which may lead to systemic organ failure and can be fatal. ARDS can occur within 24-48 hours or even up to a week after injury or acute illness, and requires intensive medical care.
2. **What is Vaping?** Vaping refers to the increasingly popular practice of inhaling vapor from an e-cigarette device, which works by heating a liquid that can contain nicotine, marijuana, or other drugs. The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown. The liquids used in e-cigarettes are largely unregulated, and they can contain toxic chemicals that can cause lung damage.

3. **How do you know Vaping is causing ARDS?** This is the reported similarity that we know at this time, Kings County Department of Public Health (KCDPH) is investigating the cases reported to us by Adventist Health. Once our investigation is complete, we will have more information.
4. **Where do the cases reside?** At this time, we know that the hospitalized individuals are from Fresno, Kings, and Tulare Counties, but we will continue to investigate for more cases.
5. **What are cannabis oils and CBD oils?** Cannabis oil is from the marijuana plant and is known for its high concentration of Cannabis. Also this oil is made by extracting the resin of the female marijuana plant with the help of alcohol. CBD oil is a collective term for oils made from fiber hemp or cannabis, and do not contain THC. CBD oil is compound oil that contains at least CBD (Cannabidiol).
6. **Where have these cases been purchasing the Cannabis oil or CBD oil's?** At this time the KCDPH is investigating the source of the oils, but our preliminary information suggests they were bought through unlicensed "pop up shops".
7. **What is the status of counties that approve the sale of CANNABIS oil and CBD oil?** Kings – no, Kern – no, Tulare - no, Fresno – no, but some cities in Fresno County do.
8. **What is a "pop up shop"?** It is a temporary shop that may be open for 24-48 hours, advertises by word of mouth, and will move locations frequently. It is typically unlicensed, and product sold has not been tested for contaminants as required by state law. It can sell any variety of items including Cannabis oils and CBD oils.
9. **Will you be testing any of the oils used by the people admitted to the hospital?** The KCDPH during their investigation will be seeking out the product used by the hospitalized cases. If obtained, they will be sent to the California Public Health lab for analysis.
10. **How will providers in the community know to look out for more cases?** The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has issued a California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) notification, which is the official public health alerting and notification program for California. CAHAN is designed for emergency preparedness information sharing, distribution of pertinent public health related events and alerting materials, dissemination of treatment and prevention guidelines, coordinated disease investigation efforts, preparedness planning, and other initiatives that strengthen state and local preparedness. Providers, clinics, and hospitals will be receiving information form this system.