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Dear Parents and Guardians,

State and local public health officials in Ohio and nationally are investigating reports of serious lung illnesses in individuals after vaping, many of them young people. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that these lung illnesses are all linked to vaping and likely associated with chemical exposure, but it is too early to pinpoint a single product or substance common to all cases.

The majority of these cases are youth and young adults. Almost all states have reported vaping-related lung injury cases, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reporting more than 2,000 cases nationally as well as a number of deaths.

Following the warnings of the U.S. Surgeon General, Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, MD, MPH, has recommended that all individuals stop vaping until more is known about these lung illnesses through public health investigations.

Vaping is a public health crisis among our youth.

Through intentional marketing practices and bubble gum, fruit, and candy-flavored vaping liquids, the vaping industry is trying to addict our next generation on nicotine. As a result, there has been a 135% increase in high school students vaping since 2017. Most of this marketing occurs through social media and is targeted toward youth. Consequently, you probably do not even see it and may want to talk with your child about vaping and the ads that they may be seeing.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has urged the Ohio General Assembly to ban flavored vaping liquids, and has asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to take swift action to draft and adopt rules to ban flavored e-cigarette products. Under Governor DeWine's leadership and action taken by the General Assembly, the legal minimum age to purchase tobacco and vaping products increased from 18 to 21 on October 17, 2019.

There is a great deal of evidence showing that vaping (sometimes known as "JUULing" because of the most popular vaping device brand, JUUL) is unsafe for kids, teens, and young adults. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine even though many youth and parents may not realize it. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the mid-20s. Besides nicotine, vaping liquid and devices also contain substances that may be harmful when breathed in, including heavy metals such as nickel and lead, volatile organic compounds which can adversely affect breathing, and chemical flavorings that are linked to serious lung disease. Some e-cigarette pods or cartridges marketed for single-use can be refilled with illicit or unknown substances purchased on the street which can be extremely dangerous. In addition, young people who vape are more likely to smoke tobacco cigarettes in the future.

It may not be readily apparent to you whether or not your child is vaping. Vaping devices can take many forms and may look like a flash drive or other computer accessories. New generations of vaping devices emit very little vapor, and it may be difficult to detect their use.

If you have not already done so, please consider having a frank discussion with your child about vaping. The U.S. Surgeon General offers some great tips in "*Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents.*" Some basic points include:

- Get credible information about e-cigarettes and young people
- Find the right moment for a natural discussion about vaping
- Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue

If you already know, or discover, that your child is vaping, there are free options to help them quit. The Ohio Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT NOW) sponsored by the Ohio Department of Health offers the "*My Life My Quit*" program specifically for young people. A national organization called the Truth Initiative sponsors another good program called "*This is Quitting.*" This program offers an option for parents who want to help kids stop vaping. More information about all of these resources is outlined below. You also may want to consult with your child's healthcare provider for quitting advice. If your child vapes and experiences chest pain, coughing, shortness of breath, or nausea, contact a medical professional immediately.

Working together, we have the best opportunity to safeguard the health of our youth.

Sincerely,

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Resources

- For credible information on e-cigarettes/vaping and youth:

The Ohio Department of Health's Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Program offers a range of resources and links to other credible websites:

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/tobacco-use-prevention-and-cessation/JUUL2/>

- For information about how to talk to your child about e-cigarettes/vaping:

U.S. Surgeon General's "*Talk with Your Teen About E-Cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents*" at https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_ECig_ParentTipSheet_508.pdf

- Two good resources to help your child quit vaping:
 - The “*My life My Quit*” program combines best practices for youth tobacco cessation adapted to include vaping and new ways to reach and coach youth using live text messages or online chat. The program includes educational materials designed for teens created with youth input, subject matter experts and community stakeholders. To enroll, text or call 1-855-891-9989 or visit <http://mylifemyquit.com>.
 - The “*This is Quitting*” program is a free text message program created with input from teens, college students, and young adults who have attempted to, or successfully, quit e-cigarettes. The program is tailored by age group to give appropriate recommendations about quitting and serves as a resource for parents looking to help their children who vape. Youth who vape and want to quit should access the program by texting "DITCHJUUL" to 88709. Parents and other adults who want to help young people quit vaping should text "QUIT" to 202-899-7550.