

# 'Keeping These Out of the Hands of Adolescents Is Critical'

Fred Hutch lung cancer expert testifies as Washington state weighs flavored vaping ban.

December 31, 2019 By Jake Siegel

---

Smoke. Asbestos. Coal dust.

Whenever human lungs inhale anything besides clean air, disease can follow. So as Washington state considers extending a ban on flavored vape products, legislators should view vapor from an e-cigarette in that light, according to [McGarry Houghton, MD](#), a lung cancer immunologist at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

"All the things that the lungs have been asked to handle other than air have wound up being a problem over time," he said. "I think that's an appropriate place to start when you're considering the potential adverse health effects from vaping."

Houghton testified about the public health impacts of vaping [during the state senate's Health & Long-Term Care Committee meeting](#) on November 20.

In October, state health officials adopted an emergency rule [that banned the sale of flavored vaping products](#). That temporary rule will expire in February. Lawmakers are now holding hearings to determine whether to renew the emergency rule, let it lapse or potentially draft legislation on a permanent ban.

On November 18, Washington state [banned vaping products that contain vitamin E acetate](#), which federal health offices have named as the prime suspect behind a rash of illnesses nationwide.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified 2,172 vaping-related illnesses around the country, noted Kathy Lofy, the state health officer for the Washington State Department of Health. Fifteen of those cases have occurred here in Washington, she told the senate committee.

Houghton, who leads Fred Hutch's [Specialized Program of Research Excellence in Lung Cancer](#), called out the latest scientific research into vaping. He highlighted two recent studies for the legislators. The first showed that [vaping caused lung cancer in mice](#). "It's hard to give mice lung cancer," he said. "That shouldn't happen."

[In the second study](#), scientists found that the lungs of vapers have elevated levels of a type of enzyme that can cause emphysema in smokers.

Those and other studies suggest that vaping, like smoking and exposure to particulates, could cause harm over time, Houghton said.

“The take-home message is that people don’t smoke cigarettes and get cancer in a year. There is a 20-, 30-, 40-year lag for all these diseases,” he said. “One does not know what vaping for 30 years is going to do, but these surrogate studies suggest it’s likely we’re going to see the same types of problems. And that’s why keeping these out of the hands of adolescents is really critical.”

[This article](#) was originally published on November 21, 2019, by Hutch News. It is republished with permission.

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/keeping-hands-adolescents-critical>