

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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COUNTY HEALTH COMMISSIONER URGES PHYSICIANS TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST YOUTH VAPING
Westchester County Health Department Sponsors Symposium on the Dangers of E-cigarettes

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, urged physicians to emphasize the harmful effects of vaping when speaking with young people.

Speaking to a group of 75 Westchester pediatricians and other health professionals on the eve of the Great American Smokeout, when Americans are encouraged to quit smoking, Amler said: “We know enough about the dangers of vaping to make stomping out this unhealthy habit among our youth a priority. That’s why it is now illegal to sell liquid nicotine or vaping supplies to anyone under age 21 in Westchester.”

“It is important for our young people to hear straight talk from their doctors about the dangers of electronic cigarettes,” Amler said to the physician participants in a symposium on this topic Wednesday night. “With their sweet and fruity flavors, slick ads and easily concealed products, the makers of electronic cigarettes and vaping supplies are promoting adolescent addiction.”

Commissioner of Health Sherlita Amler, MD said: “Pediatricians are one of the most trusted adult figures in their patients’ lives, and your voice matters. Tell your patients that e-cigarettes deliver cancer-causing, harmful substances directly to their lungs.”

Electronic cigarettes contain nicotine, an addictive substance that affects the still-developing brains of adolescents and increases the likelihood of lifelong addiction. Nicotine use can lead to lower impulse control, mood disorders and cardiovascular disease. While the long-term health consequences of vaping are unknown, there is evidence to support it is not harmless.

When they vape, users inhale an aerosol into their lungs. The aerosol can contain harmful substances, including:

- Fine toxic particles that can interfere with the growth and work of the lungs and increase the risk of heart disease, lung cancer and asthma attacks

- Flavoring such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease commonly known as “popcorn lung”
- Volatile organic compounds that can cause cancer
- Cancer-causing chemicals
- Heavy metals such as nickel, tin and lead
- Many of the harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke

Dr. Richard Stumacher, a pulmonologist with Northern Westchester Hospital, delivered the keynote address, and Dr. Daniel Cohen, a pediatrician with WestMed Medical Group, shared his personal experience and strategies for talking about vaping with his patients.

The symposium, cosponsored by the County Department of Health, Student Assistance Services, Stop-DWI of Westchester and the Montefiore Hudson Valley Collaborative, was held at the Tarrytown office of Student Assistance Services, a not-for-profit agency that provides substance abuse prevention programs and related services to Westchester students.

Vaping has spread rapidly throughout high schools and middle schools. Statewide, 27.4 percent of high school students surveyed had vaped last year, according to the New York State Department of Health. Student Assistance Services found that during the 2017-2018 school year, more than 30 percent of Westchester high school seniors reported they had vaped in the past month.

In Westchester, it is illegal to vape anywhere that smoking is prohibited, including schools, public and private universities, public transportation, workplaces, restaurants and County parks.

For more information on the health effects of vaping, go to www.westchestergov.com/health.

About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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