

## High School Cheerleader Left with ‘Deadly Diagnosis’ After Secretly Vaping for 3 Years

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- Nevada teen Brianne Cullen, 17, called her mother from cheerleading practice, suddenly unable to breathe
- Her mother, Christine Martin, said her daughter had developed bronchiolitis obliterans — known as "popcorn lung" — from vaping in secret for three years
- It's a progressive, chronic disease, and Martin says the "deadly diagnosis" is the only thing that made her stop vaping

A teenager landed in the hospital with popcorn lung after [vaping](#) in secret for three years — and her mom is sharing that “It took a deadly diagnosis for her to stop.”

Brianne Cullen, 17, began vaping when she was 14, picking up the habit to handle the [anxiety](#) of returning to school following the [Covid-19 lockdown](#), her mother, Christine Martin, said, according to [The Daily Mail](#).

In January, the Nevada teen was at cheerleading practice when she unexpectedly called home, Martin said. “She kept saying, ‘I can't breathe.’ It was the scariest thing,” said Martin, who rushed her daughter to the hospital.

There, the diagnosis was bleak: Cullen had bronchiolitis obliterans. As the [American Lung Association](#) explains, it's a rare, chronic disease, known colloquially as "[popcorn lung](#)" because it was first discovered in microwave popcorn plant workers who developed it from breathing in diacetyl, an artificial flavoring. But popcorn lung can also be caused by acetaldehyde, which is found in vape smoke, the ALA says.

The progressive disease causes [shortness of breath](#), wheezing, and fatigue.

As Martin says, "I didn't expect the news she gave me, that it was popcorn lungs that's permanent and children are dying from it."

While Cullen's prognosis is good "because we caught it so early," her mother points out that "it can also cause problems like cancer in the future ... popcorn lung is irreversible."

Cullen now relies on an inhaler to help with her breathing, and as Martin told the outlet, "We don't know the status of her lungs now. We still don't know if there will be long-term effects."

As she shared, she had no idea her daughter was vaping. "I would walk into her room all the time and I never saw her vaping. It took a deadly diagnosis for her to stop," Martin said. "Kids can walk straight into these smoking shops and buy them. It's a money grab."

"I would urge parents to spread awareness. This is meant to be a cautionary tale to not let your [kids vape](#) no matter what."