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THE MARYLAND POISON CENTER'S MONTHLY UPDATE.
NEWS. ADVANCES. INFORMATION.

Laundry Detergent Pod Ingestions

Ten minutes after a 20-month-old bit into a laundry detergent pod, the child developed profuse vomiting, wheezing and gasping, and was unresponsive upon EMS arrival (Ped Emerg Care 2013;29:743-7).

Small, single dose pods or packets of laundry detergent have been marketed in the United States under several brand names since 2010 and for more than a decade in Europe. Soon after they first appeared on store shelves, poison centers began receiving calls about pediatric exposures to these colorful and often accessible pods. In 2012, U.S. poison centers were called about 6,231 exposures to laundry detergent pods in children five years old and younger, and there have been 5,753 such calls from January 1 to July 31, 2013.

The pods contain concentrated detergent in a membrane that dissolves quickly when in contact with water. Similar to other laundry detergent products, the pods can cause nausea and vomiting when bitten into or swallowed. However, pods have been associated with a higher incidence of vomiting and serious effects such as lethargy, coughing, choking, difficulty swallowing, and respiratory distress. Children exposed to detergent in pods are also more likely to be managed in a health care facility (*MMWR 2012;61:825-9. Ped Emerg Care 2013;29:410-1. Ped Emerg Care 2013;29:482-6. Ped Emerg Care 2013;29:741-2. Ped Emerg Care 2013;29:743-7*). It is unclear why these laundry detergent pods cause serious symptoms when ingested, but the following reasons have been proposed: ingredients differ from traditional forms of laundry detergent, pH differences, higher concentrations, and delivery of the contents under force when a child bites into the pod.

Treatment of laundry detergent pod exposures consists of supportive care and irrigation if the eyes and skin are also involved. Chest radiographs should be obtained if the child has evidence of aspiration or respiratory distress. Intubation has been required in some cases.

It is important for health professionals to be aware of the potential for a quick onset of GI symptoms, altered mental status and respiratory compromise when laundry detergent pods are ingested. Call the Poison Center (800-222-1222) to report all exposures. Help us to educate parents and caregivers to protect children from gaining access to these products. A fact sheet may be downloaded at www.aapcc.org/alerts/laundry-detergent-packets.

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*Photo-Iowa Statewide
Poison Control Center*

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Poison Prevention Press is a Maryland Poison Center newsletter for the public?

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