



News Release

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Potential Intoxication from Edible Marijuana Among Spokane's Children a Growing Concern for Health District

SPOKANE, Wash. – On the heels of recent public health reports warning of poisoning dangers for adults and children specific to eating edible marijuana products, [Spokane Regional Health District](#) joins [Public Health – Seattle and King County](#), [Washington State Department of Health](#), [University of Washington](#), [Washington Poison Center](#) (WAPC), and many others, in warning the community of this potential for harm.

In Spokane County, 35 percent of marijuana exposures (potential poisonings) reported to WAPC in 2014 were for children ages 19 and under. In 2015, there is an upward trend in reporting for children 5 years of age and younger, including the case of a 4-year-old who ingested marijuana edibles belonging to a parent, resulting in an overnight stay in a pediatric intensive care unit here.

Also according to WAPC, the number of marijuana edible intoxications reported in King County in 2014 was 73 percent higher than in 2013, and there is an upward trend in 2015. Children 5 years of age and younger accounted for roughly 30 percent of all edible marijuana intoxication reports there in 2014. Seventy-three percent of children required evaluation at a hospital.

“The legalization of marijuana in Washington state presents health and safety concerns for children and youth,” said Dr. Joel McCullough, SRHD health officer. “Marijuana edibles are dangerous in the hands of kids as their intoxication symptoms can include, seizures, loss of coordination, sleepiness, trouble breathing, anxiety attacks, psychotic-like symptoms, and in some cases, coma. Edible marijuana consumers, sellers and health care providers should all take steps to prevent children from getting access to these products.”

Because edible marijuana products have relatively high amounts of THC, the symptoms are more severe in small children, and with a delay in onset of symptoms (from one to four hours), diagnosis can be difficult. Also, small children are at higher risk of intoxication because of their size and weight, as well, the long-term effects of acute marijuana ingestion on children is still unknown. Yet, marijuana products are becoming more accessible and are available in many forms that appeal to youth. Most intoxications among children occur when a child finds marijuana-containing products

such as candy, chocolate or baked goods left unattended in the home—these products look very similar to regular treats. In 2014, children under the age of 18 years accounted for half of statewide intoxication reports related to chocolate and candy edibles, and more than a quarter of reports related to ingestion of marijuana-containing baked goods.

“The majority of pediatric poisonings occur unintentionally. Marijuana edibles left lying around on the coffee table or next to snacks can easily fall into the hands of young kids,” said Dr. Alexander Garrard, Clinical Managing Director of the Washington Poison Center. “Children should be supervised, and marijuana edibles should be left up high out of reach of kids or locked in cabinets.”

Although most cases do not require hospital admission or result in serious illness, children often require extensive and costly medical evaluations to rule out other causes of their symptoms.

Key prevention steps:

- Health care providers who prescribe marijuana products for medicinal purposes should talk to their patients about safe and responsible storage of products and should advise patients of the dangers associated with children and youth consuming marijuana
- Retailers should inform customers of steps to safeguarding edible products from children and the potential for serious health consequences for children and youth who consume marijuana
- All marijuana products should be kept out of reach of children and youth and parents should use containers that are not see through, store products up high, and use the Washington Poison Center’s “Mr. Yuk” stickers on products to deter children from ingesting products. Stickers may be ordered from the Washington Poison Center website: <http://www.wapc.org/>
- Families can program the Washington Poison Center number 1-800-222-1222 into cell phones, in case of an emergency related to a child or youth consuming marijuana products
- Avoid buying edible or infused marijuana products that appeal to children or look like commercially available non-marijuana products.

For more information, visit www.srhd.org. SRHD’s web site offers comprehensive, updated information about Spokane Regional Health District and its triumphs in making Spokane a safer and healthier community. Become a fan of SRHD on [Facebook](#) to receive local safety and wellness tips. You can also follow us on Twitter [@spokanehealth](#).

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