

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

NEWS RELEASE

Media to contact:
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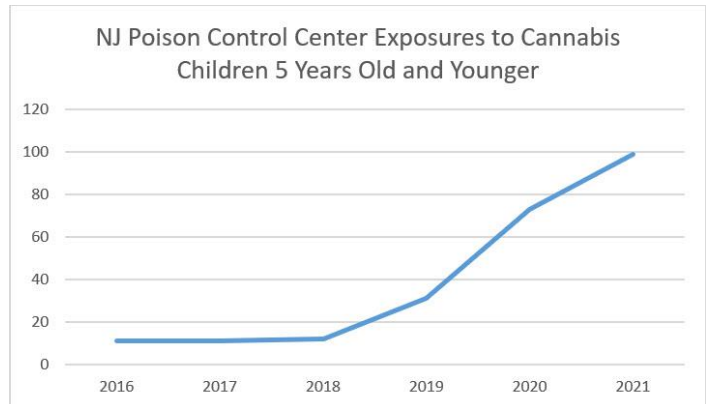
For Immediate Release

If You Have Edibles at Home Lock Them Up

More and More Young Children Are Accidentally Ingesting Cannabis Edibles

(New Jersey) – For the fourth year in a row the NJ Poison Control Center has seen an increase in calls concerning children who accidentally consumed cannabis (marijuana, THC) edibles. Last year (2021), the NJ Poison Control Center assisted in the medical treatment of more than 150 children who were accidentally exposed to cannabis edibles — nearly 100 children 5-years-old and younger; more than 55 children between the ages of 6 and 12.

Although many people believe cannabis (marijuana, THC) is safe in any amount, consuming too much cannabis can lead to unwanted physical and mental side effects ranging in severity/seriousness. When compared to smoking cannabis, the effects of edibles are often delayed leaving people to consume more than they intended.



Case 1: A three-year-old toddler was evaluated in the emergency room/department after showing signs of strange behavior. Shortly after arriving, the child had a seizure which resulted from consuming a large amount of cookies containing cannabis.

Case 2: A two-year-old toddler awoke with intense night terrors. Once awake, the toddler was drowsy and behaving as though she were “drunk”. The child was evaluated in the emergency room/department and treated. It was discovered that the toddler consumed gummy candies containing cannabis.

Over the last few years, eating food products containing cannabis, also known as edibles, has become a popular way of consuming cannabis. Eating products containing cannabis produce a delayed effect which leads to caregivers not initially realizing a child ate such products.

As edibles continue to gain popularity and become a common household product, poison control centers across the country continue to see a drastic increase in children accidentally exposed to cannabis edibles at home.

"It is difficult for anyone, especially children, to distinguish an edible marijuana product from food when the product is almost identical to common everyday foods and drinks," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "For this reason, it's important to store cannabis products, especially edibles, the same way you would store medicines in your home. Don't take the risk. Lock up your edibles."

Unlike adults, children who ingest edibles are at a much higher risk for severe health effects and even fatal outcomes from cannabis. These effects can include trouble breathing, loss of coordination, drowsiness, and seizures. In severe cases, children may need to be admitted to an intensive care unit (ICU).

"Since edibles may be highly concentrated, limit the number of edibles you have at home if you live with young and school-aged children," says Lewis Nelson, chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. "Many edible products look and taste like store-bought treats and other food products, making it difficult for children to know the difference. Although edibles like brownies, gummies, and lollipops can be fun and/or therapeutic for adults, high levels of THC (the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana), can lead to dangerous overdose symptoms in children."

When using or storing marijuana products in the home, remember the following tips to prevent an accidental exposure:

- Store edible products in a secure/locked place, out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Cannabis products can also cause severe and potentially fatal health effects in pets.
- Limit the amount/number of edible products you have in the house at one time.
- Be aware of the potency (concentration of THC) of the edibles you have at home.
- The effects of edible cannabis may be delayed compared to smoking cannabis.
- Only purchase products containing cannabis from licensed, reputable sources.

If you think someone consumed too much cannabis, contact your local poison control center immediately for medical treatment advice. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and healthcare professionals. Get help 24/7. Call 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)

If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1



Available for Media Interviews

Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine, Rutgers NJ Medical School

About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It is designated as the state's regional poison

control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#).

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About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: njms.rutgers.edu.

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