

Press Release

September 5, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Dangers of Edible Marijuana- Prevent THC Poisoning**

Marijuana (cannabis) is now legal for medical or recreational use in most U.S. states. That means the availability of tempting treats that contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, is on the rise. Unfortunately, so is the unintentional THC poisoning risk these products pose to children who get a hold of them. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), marijuana can be dangerous in all forms for children and adolescents, both in the short term and the long term. Parents can play an active role in preventing THC poisoning.

Edible marijuana products often look just like regular sweets and snacks. Some popular THC-infused products include gummy candies, chocolate bars, candies, lollipops, fudge and other candies; Baked goods, snack foods, and desserts, such as cookies, brownies, cupcakes, popcorn and ice cream; Sweetened beverages such as sodas and lemonade.

Despite their ordinary appearance there are negative effects that edible marijuana can have on children and teens. Just one marijuana cookie or candy bar can contain several times the recommended adult dose of THC. Anyone who eats an entire THC edible—especially a child—can experience overdose effects such as intoxication, altered perception, panic, paranoia, dizziness, weakness, slurred speech, poor coordination, excessive sleep, Apnea (not breathing for 10 seconds or longer) and Heart problems. For teens, regular marijuana use can impair memory and concentration and may interfere with learning. It's also associated with lower odds of completing high school or getting a college degree.

Regular use of marijuana is also linked to psychological problems, poorer lung health and a higher chance of substance use disorder in adulthood. Even using marijuana one time can alter motor control, coordination and judgment. This can contribute to unintentional deaths and injuries. Research indicates that delayed effects of edible marijuana is linked to overdosing. Edible THC products take longer than smoked marijuana to have an effect. Smoking takes just seconds to minutes. But a THC edible typically takes 30 to 60 minutes after being eaten and digested. The peak effect happens 3 to 4 hours after ingesting. Someone experimenting with THC edibles might not feel the effects as quickly as expected. They might ingest large amounts to try to "get high." This leads to overdosing and possible fatality as evidenced in 2014 when a 19 year old college student leaped to his death off a hotel balcony after

eating a cookie he bought from a recreational marijuana store in Colorado. He had eaten the whole cookie, which contained six servings of marijuana (10 mg THC/serving).

According to the AAP, there has been a reported rise in the number of children unintentionally consuming marijuana products. This is especially true in states where marijuana has been legalized. In 2020, the American Association of Poison Control Centers reported more than 3,000 exposures to edible marijuana products involving children in the United States ages 12 and under. Most of these exposures were in kids 5 years old or younger.

THC food products often are made to closely resemble popular brand name candy and snacks. The packaging may be nearly identical, with the name slightly changed (think "KeefKat" or "Pot Tart"). Some states, including Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Alaska, have passed laws to try to prevent THC poisoning. Products that contain marijuana may be required to have clear labeling with standardized serving sizes and THC content. Some states require child-proof packaging. Marijuana was legalized in Colorado for medical use in 2000 and for recreational use in 2012. A study published in JAMA Pediatrics looked at unintentional exposures to marijuana in Colorado. The study found packaging regulations like these aren't enough to keep children safe. Accidental THC poisoning cases in children under age 9 continued to increase after Colorado legalized marijuana use, even with packaging regulations. Edible THC products were involved in more than half the cases.

Federal statistics show that as more states legalize marijuana, fewer young people view it as harmful. But this perception doesn't line up with proven risks, especially from edible marijuana. The AAP advises parents to teach their children to ask permission first before eating food they find. This gives a chance for an adult to make sure the food is safe to eat; Talk to your child about the potential harm of marijuana to their developing minds and bodies. Stress the particular risks of marijuana edibles. Remind them to never drive under the influence of marijuana, or ride in a car with a driver who is under the influence of THC. Adults and teens regularly get into serious and even fatal car crashes while under the influence of marijuana and marijuana products; Talk with your pediatrician if you have any questions or need some guidance.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is an American professional association of pediatricians with the largest pediatric publishing program in the world. For more information please visit <http://www.aap.org>.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is concerned about marijuana use and its consequences on the health and development of youth. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](http://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about marijuana use at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).