

Press Release

January 9, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Study on the Number of Young Children who Accidentally Ate Cannabis Edibles Jumped 1,375% in Five Years

According to an analysis of records of the National Poison Data System published in the Journal of Pediatrics, there were more than 7,040 exposures to edible cannabis in children under 6 between 2017 and 2021. The data system is a central repository for data from America's Poison Centers. In just five years, the number of small children in the US exposed to cannabis after accidentally eating an edible rose 1,375%, per the new analysis. In 2017, there were 207 reported cases of accidental edible cannabis exposure among kids under the age of 6. In 2020 alone, young children's accidental exposures to cannabis accounted for more than 40% of all human poison exposure calls to these centers. By 2021, there were 3,054, the study found.

Researchers maintain the legalization of marijuana has contributed to this rise. 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.

A 2022 study showed that people in US states that legalized recreational cannabis use it 20% more frequently than in states that didn't legalize it. In 2017, just eight states and the District of Columbia allowed recreational cannabis use, and 30 allowed it for medicinal purposes. By 2021, those numbers had grown significantly to 19 and 40, respectively. With increased legalization, there may also be more products available overall. Additionally, Marijuana was legalized in Colorado for medical use in 2000 and for recreational use in 2012. Unintentional exposures to marijuana in Colorado. Packaging regulations are insufficient 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.

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.

Many edibles come in the form of candies, cookies, brownies and chocolates, products that can have a strong toddler appeal. Research has found that the packaging of some edible products, especially those available on the black market, looks nearly identical to the real thing. There are knockoff Doritos, Cheetos, Nerds Rope and Gushers candy, for example. Large food companies have sued many of the companies selling these products, but they're still available. Some packages also have child-friendly cartoon characters. Even if the packaging warns that the product contains cannabis or THC, it's often in small print, and many young children have not yet learned to read.

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.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (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 child's pediatrician if you have any questions or need some guidance.

The CDC recommends that people keep all cannabis products out of the reach of children in childproof containers.

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 or visit SAFE's website to learn more about marijuana use at www.safeglencove.org.