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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Trend of Children Accidentally Eating Marijuana Laced Treats Growing

Long Island Emergency rooms are following a national trend of an alarming rise in the number of small children eating laced edibles. A study in the Journal Pediatrics found more than 7,000 cases of children under the age of 6 eating marijuana edibles from across the country were reported to the National Poison Data System between 2017 and 2021. The number of young children accidentally eating marijuana-laced treats has jumped dramatically over the last five years, according to a report released Tuesday, a trend also seen at Long Island emergency rooms. There were 207 cases in 2017 and 3,054 in 2021.

“This is certainly consistent with what we’re seeing in the pediatric emergency department here,” said Dr. Matthew Harris, attending physician for pediatric emergency medicine at Cohen Children’s Medical Center in New Hyde Park. He called the nationwide increase a “shocking number.” “A lot of it is attributed to the way they are packaged and the way they taste as they are appealing to children of all ages. Edibles are formulated as colorful gummy candies, chocolate bars and cookies packaged to look like popular snacks such as Oreos and Doritos. The cannabis Oreos [packaging] is nearly identical to brand name Oreos. Harris also noted that sometimes the doses of cannabis in a chocolate bar can be as small as one square of the candy. “Kids don’t eat one square of chocolate,” he said, “They eat the whole bar.” He continued to say that most of the children he has seen come into the emergency room are “a little bit altered, a little bit woozy,” after accidentally ingesting cannabis edibles. “We have had some kids who were so heavily sedated that they had to be admitted to the intensive care unit for observation,” he said. “They require a great deal of stimulation, even just to wake up.”

Researchers found the increase in cases followed the trend of more locations across the United States having legalized marijuana.” Researchers wrote, “Two- and 3-year-old children were at highest risk for cannabis exposure. In the 6-year-old age group they can open containers and climb high spaces to access items of interest. The study found the largest increase in cannabis exposures in children under the age of 6 took places from 2019 to 2020. Currently, 37 states permit the use of marijuana for medical purposes and 21 states regulate recreational use. New York legalized the recreational sale of cannabis in March 2021. The first legal recreational retailer opened last week in New York City. The state has issued seven retail licenses on Long Island, though it’s unclear when recipients will launch their operations.

The study analyzed reports to the National Poison Data System, which includes the nation’s 55 regional poison control centers. More than half the children were toddlers, ages 2 and 3, the study showed. More than 90% got the edibles at home. Researchers were able to track the outcome of 5,000 reported cases. About 600 kids, or about 8%, were admitted to critical care units, most often with depressed breathing or even coma. Nearly 15% were admitted to noncritical care units and more than a third were seen in emergency rooms. Drowsiness, breathing problems, accelerated heart rate and vomiting were the most common symptoms. The study did not provide state-specific statistics. The New York City Department of

Health, which oversees the regional poison control center that includes Long Island, said Tuesday it could not immediately provide the number of reports from the state or Long Island of children that had ingested cannabis edibles.

Lyla Hunt, deputy director of public health and campaigns at the New York State Office of Cannabis Management said it has “put forth regulations around packaging and marketing designed to make sure legal products are only marketed to the adults allowed to consume them “It is possible that COVID-related quarantines and school/- day care closures played a role, with young children having more opportunity for exposure while at home,”

In addition, smoke shops and tobacco retailers located in areas where families shop daily expose our most vulnerable little children to these appealing edibles. Some establishments have even tried to illegally get away with selling lacing items with THC that are most tempting to youngsters, mirroring candy.

For help Quitting smoking or vaping or to help a loved beat a Nicotine Addiction please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org. “The American Lung Association says the only thing that should go into your lungs is clean air, so if you’re inhaling anything, it could potentially be toxic to your lungs!!

The New York State Smokers’ Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco and the service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit them at: <https://www.nysmokefree.com/>.for Quit Help.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all combustible and electronic products with marijuana and tobacco-especially on the developing brain. The Agency is employing environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE’s website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.