

Injury Alert

Products in the News: Laundry & Dishwashing Packs

December 29, 2014

Parents and caregivers should be aware of the dangers of children swallowing laundry and dishwashing detergent packs. The lightweight, single-use detergent plastic packets dissolve in water. Because of their bright colours and squishy texture, children can mistake them for candy.



What are the hazards?

Laundry detergents are powerful cleaning products that may contain ingredients which can lead to harmful health effects upon ingestion. Children who swallow the detergent packs may experience a variety of serious symptoms including severe abdominal pain, vomiting, or difficulty breathing. A study in the U.S. found that 17,230 children younger than 6 years were exposed to detergent pods in 2012-2013. Children less than 3 years accounted for 73% of the cases. Of the exposed children 4.4% were hospitalized and 7.5% experienced a moderate or major medical outcome. In 102 of the cases (0.6%) required tracheal intubation and there was one death. (Valdez, Casavant, Spiller et al, 2014)

What you should do

- Choose regular laundry and dishwasher detergent if you have a small child.
- As with all cleaning products, detergent packs, should be stored in a locked cabinet or drawer and out of the reach of children. A child safety latch is an appropriate alternative.
- Read the label and follow instructions before using.
- If a child swallows a laundry pack or some of the contents, call a [Poison Control Centre](#) or your health care provider right away.



1 855 776 4766

Manitoba Centre
Poison Centre
Anti-Poison
du Manitoba

What Health Canada is doing

Health Canada is working with the Canadian Association of Poison Control Centres to gather information on incidents that may have been reported to provincial poison control centres. The products involved in the reported incidents are the subject of on-going review by Health Canada. In the meantime, some manufacturers are creating more secure packaging to make it more difficult for children to access the detergent packs.

How to report problems with consumer products

Health Canada would like to remind Canadians to report any product-related health or safety incidents. [An easy-to-use incident report form](#) is now available on the Department's website. To contact Health Canada, Product Safety, email CPSR-RSPC@hc-sc.gc.ca or call 1-866-225-0709.

The IMPACT Team

Jacquie Habing, Manager

Lynne Warda, MD, PhD, FRCPC, Medical Consultant

Cynthia Menzies, Injury Prevention Specialist

Wendy French, Injury Prevention Coordinator

Kate Dubberley, Program Analyst