CDC REPORTS: SEVERE BLEEDING LINKED TO SYNTHETIC CANNABINOID USE

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and some health departments across the nation are actively investigating more than 100 cases of severe bleeding among people who have used synthetic cannabinoids, or ‘fake marijuana.’ The first cases were reported in Illinois, and cases have now been reported in several other states including Virginia. The synthetic cannabinoid products implicated in these cases have been found to contain brodifacoum, an ingredient used to make rat poison.

Synthetic Cannabinoids (SC) are marketed as an all-natural, safe, and legal way to get ‘high.’ But synthetic cannabinoids are NOT legal, they are NOT natural, and they are NOT safe. SC are produced in illicit, unregulated labs, often in China. They consist of man-made chemicals sprayed onto dried plant material. Products are usually smoked in joints or pipes similar to marijuana. They may also be sold in liquid form to vaporize in an e-cigarette or other electronic vaping device. Brand names include Spice, K2, Black Mamba, Scooby Snax, Genie, and others. The chemicals are not tested for safety. Manufacturers constantly change recipes to avoid prosecution; identical packages could contain completely different strengths or

GOT KIDS? BE WARY OF E-LIQUID

In 2015, a father in Oregon gave his 6-year old daughter some liquid ibuprofen for a sprained ankle. Immediately she complained of burning in her throat, and soon lost consciousness and had a seizure. Unbeknownst to the father, the child’s mother had been using the bottle to store some liquid nicotine she had purchased online for her refillable e-cigarette. Rushed to the hospital, the child began vomiting, became unresponsive, and needed

POISON TRIVIA

Keyless ignitions are a modern convenience now standard in all new automobiles. But they have led to over 2 dozen poisoning deaths and many poisoning injuries, including brain damage. What is the problem?

Answer on page 4
products. Users don’t really know exactly what chemicals they are putting into their bodies or what will happen. The effects of synthetic cannabinoids can be unpredictable and life-threatening, including:

- Severe agitation and anxiety.
- Seizures.
- Racing heartbeat and high blood pressure.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Muscle spasms, seizures, and tremors.
- Intense hallucinations and psychotic episodes.
- Suicidal and other harmful thoughts and/or actions.
- (NEW as of March 1st, 2018) Severe unexplained bleeding or bruising. This may include nosebleeds, bleeding of the gums, blood in the urine or stool, excessive bleeding from cuts/wounds, vomiting blood, heavy menstrual bleeding, or excessive back pain.

If you have purchased any synthetic cannabinoid product (e.g. K2, Spice, “Fake Weed,” etc.) do not use it. If you begin to experience severe unexplained bleeding or bruising and have used one of these products, seek medical care immediately. If you have used a SC product recently but are not experiencing severe bleeding or bruising, you should still see a doctor. Symptoms may develop later. A health care facility can do a test to determine if you need treatment before symptoms appear.

Health care providers should consult the Blue Ridge Poison Center for advice on patient management (1-800-222-1222). Free and confidential.

Please feel free to share the infographic to the left on your social media platforms, a website you manage, or in any other way. Contact Kristin Wenger: KLW2S@VIRGINIA.EDU for help in copying or downloading the image.

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**News and Notes**

Safe Kids Worldwide released a report about storing medication safely. Unintentional medicine poisoning is preventable, especially by parents and caregivers. While people know the importance of keeping medicine up and away and out of sight, not everyone is storing their medication safely. Every 12 days, a child under age six dies of unintentional medicine poisoning in the US. To view or share the report, visit www.Safekids.org.

In honor of Nurses Week 2018, we spotlighted one of our nurses each day on our Facebook page. Visit it to see the archived posts and find the answer to these questions:

- Which nurse rescued a baby snake from the UVA Hospital parking garage?
- Which nurse has 6 young children AND 6 goats?
- What unusual question about a spider did nurse Kathy Mayo once receive?
ventilator support. She slowly recovered the next day and was released.¹

In December 2014, a woman left an uncapped 100 mg bottle of liquid nicotine purchased for her electronic cigarette on a low table. Later, her sister arrived with her 18 month old son, and while the adults were distracted, the child discovered the bottle and drank the contents. Almost immediately he began convulsing and died soon after at a nearby hospital from cardiac arrhythmia.²

“There is a lot we still don’t know about the safety of e-cigarettes and other electronic vaping devices,” says Dr. Justin Rizer, Medical Toxicology Fellow at the Blue Ridge Poison Center, “particularly about the long term effects of vaping. At this time, the Blue Ridge Poison Center takes no official stand on whether or not these products are safe for adults to use, or whether or not they can and should be used as a product to help someone quit smoking. We need more research to determine those things. But we want the public to understand the potential dangers of liquid nicotine. Exposure to liquid nicotine can be dangerous; even deadly.”

The continuing rise in popularity of electronic nicotine devices (such as e-cigarettes, vape pens, JUULs, etc.) has coincided with an increase in calls to poison control centers and visits to emergency rooms about exposure to the liquid contents (called e-liquid or e-fluid). Many e-liquids contain nicotine. Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical compound that, in high doses, can cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, cardiac arrest, seizures, coma, and respiratory arrest.

Though commonly inhaled as a vapor, liquid nicotine exposure may also occur through swallowing or skin contact. Children are particularly at risk because they may confuse e-liquids with familiar treats or beverages. Manufacturers of vaping devices and e-liquid have been widely criticized for package designs and flavors that are particularly attractive to youth, and some of the vaping devices resemble toys. Children may put vaping devices and refill bottles in their mouths as they imitate the behavior of adults using the devices, leading to accidental ingestion.

As part of ongoing efforts to protect youth from the dangers of nicotine and tobacco products, on May 1, 2018 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued 13 warning letters to manufacturers, distributors, and retailers for selling e-liquids used in e-cigarettes with labeling and/or advertising that cause them to resemble kid-friendly food products. Several of the companies receiving warning letters were also cited for illegally selling the products to minors.

In a press release distributed the same day, FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D. said: “No child

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should be using any tobacco product, and no tobacco products should be marketed in a way that endangers kids – especially by using imagery that misleads them into thinking the products are things they’d eat or drink. Looking at these side-to-side comparisons is alarming. It is easy to see how a child could confuse these e-liquid products for something they believe they’ve consumed before – like a juice box. These are preventable accidents that have the potential to result in serious harm or even death. Companies selling these products have a responsibility to ensure they aren’t putting children in harm’s way or enticing youth use, and we’ll continue to take action against those who sell tobacco products to youth and market products in this egregious fashion.” The entire document is available online: https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm605507.htm.

On January 28, 2016, President Obama signed the Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act of 2015 into law which requires liquid nicotine containers to be packaged in child-resistant packaging. However, child resistant packaging alone may not prevent children from gaining access to the contents. Additional measures should be taken to keep them safe.

Here are some guidelines for adults who choose to use electronic vaping devices:

- Use caution when refilling e-cigarettes. Avoid skin or eye contact with the e-liquid.
- Keep e-cigarettes and refill bottles “up and away,” out of the sight and reach of children. This may mean giving visitors a safe place to store their purses, suitcases, or other belongings.
- Don’t transfer the contents of an e-liquid refill bottle into any other container.
- Do not re-use empty refill bottles for any other purpose.
- Do not let children play with e-cigarettes, even if they are empty.
- Replace the cap and discard empty e-liquid refill bottles, preferably mixed with something unpleasant and sealed in a plastic bag.

If someone feels ill after using an e-cigarette or handling liquid nicotine, or if you believe someone has swallowed any amount of liquid nicotine, call the experts at the Blue Ridge Poison Center right away: 1-800-222-1222. Your call is free and confidential. Open 24 hours a day, every single day.


Poison Trivia Answer: Some drivers take the key with monoxide gas into their home.