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From: Ron Kirschner, MD, Medical Director
To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
Subject: Pediatric Delta-8-THC ingestions
Date: 1/30/23

- Δ^8 -THC is a minor component of cannabis that is purported to be less psychoactive than Δ^9 -THC.
- Drug laws are generally targeted at Δ^9 THC, considered the main psychoactive component.
- The 2018 U.S. Farm Bill allowed growth of hemp plants containing <0.3% Δ^9 THC.
- Because Δ^8 -THC produces similar CNS effects and is unregulated, edible products containing this substance have become widely available even in states where recreational cannabis is not legal.
- Following the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, there was a significant increase in cannabis exposures among children <5 years old reported to poison centers.
- Most of these exposures involve edible products, which often resemble candy or other items appealing to small children, and the active ingredient is frequently Δ^8 -THC.
- Although Δ^8 -THC is a minor ingredient of the of the cannabis plant, it can be chemically synthesized from the non-psychoactive substance cannabidiol in a process employing heat and acid.
- Families should be advised to secure all cannabis-derived products carefully – inadvertent ingestion can cause serious CNS depression and potentially respiratory compromise in young children. Should CNS depression occur, there is no antidote; treatment is with supportive care.

References

- Akpunonu P. Sedation and acute encephalopathy in a pediatric patient following ingestion of delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol gummies. *Am J Case Rep* 2021; 22:e933488.
- Babalonis S. Δ^8 -THC: Legal status, widespread availability, and safety concerns. *Cannabis Cannaninoid Res* 2021; 6:362-65.
- Laudone TW. Changes in unintentional exposures in children 6 months to 5 years reported to U.S, poison centers during the 1st 9 months of the coronavirus pandemic. *Clin Toxicol* 2022; 60:1029-1031.

Our nurse certified specialists in poison information and physician toxicologists are available 24 hours a day to answer your questions.