



NEWS RELEASE

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New Study Finds Laundry Detergent Packets More Dangerous than Other Types of Detergent

Researchers urge families with young children to use traditional detergent instead of packets

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – A new study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Central Ohio Poison Center found that exposure to laundry detergent packets is more dangerous to young children than exposure to other types of laundry and dishwasher detergent.

The study, published online today in *Pediatrics*, found that from January 2013 through December 2014 Poison Control Centers in the U.S. received 62,254 calls related to laundry and dishwasher detergent exposures among children younger than 6 years old. The study included calls about both traditional detergent and detergent packets and found that detergent packets accounted for 60 percent of all calls. Almost half (45 percent) of the calls for exposure to laundry detergent packets were referred to a health care facility for evaluation and treatment, significantly more than calls related to exposures to traditional laundry detergent (17 percent), traditional dishwasher detergent (four percent), or dishwasher detergent packets (five percent).

Incidents related to laundry detergent packets saw the biggest rise - increasing 17 percent over the two year study period. Poison control centers received more than 30 calls a day about children who had been exposed to a laundry detergent packet, which is about one call every 45 minutes.

In addition, the most serious clinical effects such as coma, trouble breathing, heart problems, and death, were only seen in children exposed to the chemicals in laundry detergent packets. The risks of having a clinical effect, a serious medical outcome, hospitalization, or intubation were significantly higher for children who had been exposed to the chemicals in a laundry detergent packet than for those exposed to any other type of laundry or dishwasher detergent. At least one child a day in the U.S. was admitted to the hospital due to a laundry detergent packet exposure. The two child deaths in this study were both associated with exposure to laundry detergent packets.



In an effort to reduce unintentional exposures to the contents of laundry detergent packets, ASTM published a voluntary [Standard Safety Specification for Liquid Laundry Packets](#) in 2015, but some experts feel it did not go far enough.

“This voluntary standard is a good first step, but it needs to be strengthened,” said [Gary Smith, MD, DrPH](#), the senior author of the study and director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. “Unless this unacceptably high

number of exposures declines dramatically, manufacturers need to continue to find ways to make this product and its packaging safer for children.”

Experts recommend that families with children younger than 6 years old use traditional detergent instead of packets. “Many families don’t realize how toxic these highly concentrated laundry detergent packets are,” says [Marcel J. Casavant, MD](#) a co-author of the study, chief of toxicology at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and medical director of the Central Ohio Poison Center. “Use traditional laundry detergent when you have young kids in your home. It isn’t worth the risk when there is a safer and effective alternative available.”

Parents and child caregivers can help children stay safer by following these tips:

- People who have young children that live in or visit their home should use traditional laundry detergent, which is much less toxic than laundry detergent packets.
- Store all laundry detergent including packets up, away, and out of sight - in a locked cabinet is best for laundry packets.
- Close laundry detergent packet packages or containers and put them away immediately after use.
- Save the national Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) in your cell phone and post it near your home phones.

Data for this study were obtained from the National Poison Data System, which is maintained by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC). The AAPCC receives data on calls to participating poison control centers (PCCs) that serve the US and its territories. PCCs receive phone calls through the Poison Help Line and document information about the product, route of exposure, individual exposed, exposure scenario, and other data.



The Central Ohio Poison Center provides state-of-the-art poison prevention, assessment and treatment to residents in 64 of Ohio's 88 counties. The center services are available to the public, medical professionals, industry, and human service agencies. The Poison Center handles more than 42,000 poison exposure calls annually, and confidential, free emergency poisoning treatment advice is available 24/7. To learn more about the Poison Center, visit www.bepoisonsmart.org.

The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital works globally to reduce injury-related pediatric death and disabilities. With innovative research at its core, CIRP works to continually improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, biomechanics, prevention, acute treatment and rehabilitation of injuries. CIRP serves as a pioneer by translating cutting edge injury research into education, policy, and advances in clinical care. For related injury prevention materials or to learn more about CIRP, visit www.injurycenter.org.