

THE CHILD HEALTH CONNECTION, INC

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POTENTIAL DANGERS OF LIQUID NICOTINE

Since the introduction of the electronic cigarette quit-smoking aid in 2010, there has been a surge in calls to poison control centers around the nation. These calls primarily involve children under five years of age. Nationwide, the number of poisoning cases linked to e-liquids jumped 300% in 2013 and, according to information from the National Poison Data System, the number is expected to double this year.

According to authorities, the liquid nicotine used to fill e-cigarettes is one of the most potent naturally occurring neuro toxins we have. In terms of immediate poison risk, it is more dangerous than tobacco because the liquid is absorbed more quickly and can even be absorbed through the skin.

The e-cigarettes were initially disposable devices that looked like a conventional cigarette. Through technical advances they have evolved to a larger, reusable gadget that can be refilled with liquid, generally a combination of nicotine, flavorings and solvents. The e-liquids are sold in small vials not regulated by federal authorities, and sold legally in stores. These vials, which do not have childproof caps, are kept casually around the house for regular refilling of e-cigarettes. Children can be drawn to the bright colored labeling and fragrant flavorings like cherry, chocolate and bubble gum that are used in the preparation of these liquids. A teaspoon of even highly diluted e-liquid can kill a small child. Adults are also at risk as they can be exposed by mishandling of the liquid since it can be absorbed through the skin.

Parents are urged to treat these products like any other poison. Keep these vials or cartridges in a high, locked cabinet out of the reach of children. Whether ingested or absorbed through the skin it can cause vomiting, seizures and even death. If symptoms are noted, call Rocky Mountain Poison Control 1-800-222-1222 and seek medical attention.

Resources

Selling a Poison by the Barrel: Liquid Nicotine for E-Cigarettes. The New York Times, March 23, 2014.

KSPR.com. *Liquid Nicotine Dangers in e-cigarettes.*