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Illinois Poison Center and Comer Children's Hospital Release Report on Dangers of Laundry Pods

White paper highlights risks of product, severity of symptoms and potential solutions

July 1, 2015 – The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) and University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital today released [Laundry Pods: A Home Safety Threat to Children](#), a detailed analysis of the threat these popular products can pose to young children, particularly age five and under. Poison centers across the country have received more than 32,000 calls on the matter since 2012. The Illinois Poison Center has also seen related calls rise in recent years—from 60 in all of 2012 to almost 10 times that in 2014.

“In my 20-plus years as a physician and toxicology expert, I have never seen a common household consumer product that has caused this many injuries to small children,” said Illinois Poison Center Medical Director Michael Wahl, MD. “The Illinois Poison Center has monitored this trend across the state since pods broke into the market a few years ago, and we remain committed to educating all Illinoisans on the dangers and advocating for a safer product.”

According to the report, the most common symptoms of laundry pod exposure are nausea, vomiting, coughing, choking, drowsiness and eye, mouth and throat irritation, but can include difficulty breathing, respiratory burns and even seizures and coma in extreme cases. Two children have died since 2012 due to laundry pod exposure.

Children are naturally curious and explore through taste and touch, the paper notes. Unlike the product in question, toys and books designed for children are made from durable materials meant to withstand this exploration process. The pods' exterior film is very easily dissolved, and ingestion of the liquid inside can lead to critical care hospital admissions and even ventilation.

While laundry pods are not marketed to children, the bright colors, fresh smell and small, squishy format are highly attractive to them. A number of brand varieties are essentially indistinguishable from candies or toys, as seen in the report.

Because the demand for laundry detergent in a convenient format is unlikely to wane, officials have called on stricter regulation of pod packaging and design in order to protect the children in households that use them. Per the report, these harmful exposures are highly preventable with appropriate interventions.

“Obviously, parents should do all that they can to keep laundry detergent packets out of the reach of children, but as the report released today clearly shows, there is more we can do to address the rising numbers of poisonings head on,” U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said. “Earlier this year I introduced the Detergent Poisoning and Child Safety Act that would require the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to set mandatory safety standards for easily accessible liquid detergent packets. Making the design and color of packets less appealing to children, strengthening the water-soluble outer layer and adding proper warning labels are common-sense protections for consumers similar to those for countless other household products. We can still have convenience without sacrificing safety for children and families.”

The IPC and Comer Children’s recommend using traditional detergent formulations if there are small children in the home. The IPC does receive hundreds of calls per year on traditional laundry detergent, but the lower concentration very rarely results in serious symptoms.

The center urges anyone using the pods to keep them up high in an opaque container and locked away. They should never be used for games or displayed in front of children. Parents should be sure that all members of the household, including relatives, babysitters and other caretakers understand the danger these items present.

If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a laundry pod or another potentially harmful substance, please call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. For more information, please visit the Illinois Poison Center’s [website](#).

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*The **Illinois Poison Center** is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.*