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What Parents Need to Know About Edibles

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It is important to know what edibles are, the effects they have on a growing body and what to do if your child eats one. Educating them on marijuana usage can help them make responsible decisions.

What Are Edibles?

Edibles is the term used to refer to any type of food products that contain cannabis, the active ingredient in marijuana. Cannabis can be infused in chocolates, gummies, chips, cookies,—even juices! While these products are usually marketed towards adults, they are of particular concern because they are both visually appealing and taste good to children and adolescents. Be aware that these products might not necessarily smell like cannabis and thus it's always important to read labels where cannabis products can be legally bought and consumed. These products are not safe for children and it is important to keep edibles out of sight and locked away, like any other prescription or over-the-counter medication.

What is THC?

Marijuana is a product of the plant *Cannabis sativa*. *Cannabis sativa* contains a substance called tetrahydrocannabinol, more commonly known as THC.

THC is the substance responsible for the effects of marijuana on a person's mental state, like when a person experiences euphoria or feels "high". In children and young adults, major developmental changes in the brain make marijuana use during this time particularly risky. Adding THC into their system causes dysfunction, as nerve connections form erratically and imperfectly, leading to a decrease in IQ that may not improve, affected memory, and a higher risk of lifelong substance use.

What Can Happen if My Child Eats an Edible?

If your child consumes a product containing THC, they may develop symptoms such as:

- Excessive sleepiness
- Fast heart rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Feelings of anxiety, panic or paranoia
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or weakness
- Poor coordination
- Seizures or coma (in rare cases)

If your child eats an edible and experiences any of these symptoms, call your local poison control center. If your child is experiencing severe symptoms, take your child to an emergency care physician immediately. Symptoms in children may be more severe depending on the amount of THC consumed.

How Can I talk to My Child About Edibles and Marijuana Usage?

Having honest and age-appropriate conversations with your child is key. Start by sharing facts about marijuana: what it is, how it's used, and symptoms people can develop. Ask your child how this topic makes them feel, to gauge their interest and comfortability. Make sure to leave room for your child to share stories and ask questions. Approaching this topic in a non-judgmental way will help your child feel safe when talking to you about marijuana usage and edibles.

If you have questions or concerns about an ingestion, call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 to speak with an expert immediately, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

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