Accidental or Intentional, Tide Pods Meant For Laundry Not Mouths

By Jamie Wells, M.D. — January 14, 2018

Some dopey teenagers are creating a social media firestorm by posting their adverse reactions to intentionally ingesting laundry detergent pods. Is this stupidity a new worry?

A new wave of concern is surrounding potent laundry pods. Due to a viral social media storm spreading among teenagers as the "Tide Pod Challenge," adolescents are posting their deliberate ingestions of the colorful cleansers and their often violent reactions to its punctured contents.

Yes, you read that right. Teens are intentionally ingesting these chemically toxic pods, filming their adverse response and disseminating it throughout the internet.

It's a big problem

This has prompted the manufacturer Tide to put out the following video release and get celebrity backing to do the same so as to squash its appeal.
What should Tide PODs be used for? DOING LAUNDRY. Nothing else.

Eating a Tide POD is a BAD IDEA, and we asked our friend @robgronkowski to help explain.
New England Patriots Tight End Rob Gronkowski weighed in:

**Rob Gronkowski 🏈 @RobGronkowski · Jan 12**

I’ve partnered with @Tide to make sure you know, Tide PODs are for doing laundry. Nothing else!

**Tide 🔄 @tide**

What should Tide PODs be used for? DOING LAUNDRY. Nothing
Even the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) was compelled to make this statement:
Please don't eat laundry pods. Learn more ways to #preventpoison bit.ly/2CvLKY1

A truth you’ve always known
A cause you can believe in

HUMAN PEOPLE UNITED AGAINST EATING LAUNDRY PODS

A meme should not become a family tragedy.
Don’t eat poison.

USCPSC CPSC.gov

Is this craze a new worry?
The intentional oral consumption by teens is, hopefully, a fleeting fad. But, accidental ingestion has been an issue that has previously been in the media and governmental spotlight. Due to the enticing nature of the colorful packaging, there have been issues with their desirability to children and this has also contributed to the confusion for elderly patients suffering from dementia. For instance, young children often think they are candy or a toy.

The untoward effects of the poisonous components have resulted in death and serious injury often leading to hospitalization (e.g. loss of consciousness, coma, drowsiness, difficulty breathing requiring intubation, excessive vomiting). When the package ruptures and its contents make contact with the eye, severe irritation and even temporary vision loss have ensued due to ocular burns. (See here [1] for poisoning prevention and here [2] for CPSC's safety alert for single-load liquid laundry packets potential harm to children).

A few years ago, I appeared on Arise America TV News discussing the topic given the harmful effects toddlers experienced when kept within their reach. To see the complete video, click here [3] (talk about accidental pod poisoning begins around 1:55).
Regardless of packaging changes or warnings, small children and those otherwise impaired due to loss of vision or altered mentation from a dementia-like illness are most at risk of accidental ingestion. For children, the time of use has represented a particularly worrisome period of such a consequence. Know the occupants of your household, their limitations and capacity, and make adjustments accordingly to prevent this unnecessary health hazard. Many recommend not bringing the pods into the home of small children. If you do opt to do so, then hypervigilance is essential to using the product safely. Never letting a child play with them is very important.

Under these circumstances and, in general, knowing the number --and readily displaying it-- for your local poison control center is always a good idea, especially with these populations. In early childhood and toddler stages, kids develop at rapid and variable rates. From one week to the next, what they can get into can change. Be sure to have active, frequent discussions with your child's pediatrician or loved one's physician to optimize safety over time and form a plan, in general, if a poisoning takes place. Calling 911 and immediately seeking emergency services is crucial when someone is unconscious, not breathing or there is urgent worry or concern. Earlier medical intervention is ideal as delays can allow progression and bad outcomes.

For those intentionally participating in this type of passing trend, parental intervention is critical to preventing irreversible damage. Adolescents will always test their limits, some to greater extents than others. Pushing boundaries is vital to their learning and development. Avoiding its reach to the realm of dangerous and pathological involves continuous, dynamic and consistent exchange from engaged, communicative parents, loved ones and mentors. In so doing, you won't control --nor should you want to-- their every move or stifle their growth, but you will hopefully steer them away from the more permanent harms they will inevitably regret.

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Links
[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z3op45gPl8