

Kids Could Overdose From Nicotine-Laced 'Candy'

R.J. Reynolds launched product for smokers in smoke-free settings, but doctors have concerns

MONDAY, April 19 (HealthDay News) -- In 2009, tobacco giant R.J. Reynolds launched Camel Orbs, dissolvable nicotine pellets flavored with cinnamon or mint that are intended for use by smokers who find themselves in smoke-free surroundings.

But researchers writing in the April 19 online edition of *Pediatrics* warn that the product, which can resemble candy, poses a serious health threat for children and youths.

"This product is called a 'tobacco' product, but in the eyes of a 4-year-old, the pellets look more like candy than a regular cigarette. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, and to make it look like a piece of candy is recklessly playing with the health of children," study author Gregory Connolly, director of the Tobacco Control Research Program at the Harvard School of Public Health, said in a university press release.

According to the study, Camel Orbs contain 1 milligram of nicotine per pellet. The company has also launched Camel Strips (containing 0.6 milligrams of nicotine per strip) and Camel Sticks (3.1 milligrams of nicotine per strip).

The products are intended for use by smokers in places where smoking is not allowed, but Connolly pointed out that infants or children attracted by the candy-like Camel Orb could be at serious risk from nicotine poisoning if they ingested the product. They noted that small children can begin to experience nicotine poisoning symptoms from as little as 1 milligram of nicotine.

Ingesting higher levels can cause real illness. For example, a 1-year-old infant could experience mild to moderate symptoms of nicotine poisoning by ingesting 8 to 14 Orbs, while 10 to 17 Orbs would bring about severe poisoning or even death, the authors said. A 4-year-old would encounter severe toxicity or death after ingesting 16 to 27 Orbs, 27 strips or five sticks, they added.

In a statement, R.J. Reynolds agreed that "tobacco products, along with many other types of goods, need to be kept out of the hands of children," and that the company has taken steps to curb accidental ingestion by kids, including using child-resistant packaging, adding a warning label and providing poison-control experts with full information on the potential dangers to children.

The Harvard researchers countered that even though the products' packaging is designed to be child-proof, adults might still leave opened packages where children could find them.

More information

Learn how to protect your children from poisoning at the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

-- E.J. Mundell

SOURCE: Harvard School of Public Health, news release, April 19, 2010; statement, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company

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