



Liquid Nicotine:

Fatal Poison and Easy Access Makes this an Issue Pediatricians Must Address

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In general as pediatricians, we do a good job about counseling on potential poisons in the home. But there may be one fatal poison many of us have never thought to talk about with our patients and their families – liquid nicotine.

This very new product, for a host of complicated reasons, has fallen outside both the FDA and the Poison Prevention Packaging Act and therefore is not required to have child resistant packaging. Liquid nicotine is often sold in small food coloring-like or dropper-like bottles that are brightly colored and filled with delicious smelling liquid in flavors like piña colada or cotton candy. There are no warning labels. Instead, they almost look as if they are beckoning to you to try them. The problem is that one of those little bottles could kill *four* toddlers. Depending on the concentration, the lethal dose may be as low as less than ½ a teaspoon. Bottles can have a concentration as high as 18-36mg/mL. To put this in perspective, a cigarette has about 1-2mg of nicotine.

Just as the nicotine patch is effective through the skin, liquid nicotine does not need to be swallowed to be toxic. Simply by spilling it on himself, a child could start to experience the toxic effects of nicotine.

This is something that parents are unfortunately starting to find out. In 2014, there were 4000 calls made to poison control concerning liquid nicotine. This is up 250% from the year before. And of course in December of last year, there was the heartbreaking story of a one-year-old boy who, while his mother was in the room trying to put on a movie for him, reached into a moving box, put the little bottle in his mouth and took a sip. He died.

We as pediatricians need to make this an issue that parents know about so that they can protect their children. Equally important, we need to talk about it so that liquid nicotine safety becomes part of the National conversation. A bill is currently in both the House and the Senate that would require child resistant packaging and flow restrictors on these little bottles but we need the public and the politicians to realize the urgency of this issue. So please, join me in getting the message out. In your office visits, on your social media accounts, discuss liquid nicotine and how dangerous it is to children.
