

Nicotine Pouch Poisonings: Dangers Lurking in Small White Packages



Young children are curious by nature and they often see and explore things in their environment that others may not even notice. For those with experience around young kids, you know that they learn about their environment by putting things in their mouths and they mimic what adults do, whether that be good behaviors or bad.

These trends, and a change in how smokeless tobacco is packaged, has led to a recent report noting an over 700% increase (YES < 700%) in the number of children poisoned by nicotine pouches. In the past, smokeless tobacco was packed in a small can, as a loose-leaf product that when disposed of, was spit out and often blended into the ground or garbage. Today, smokeless tobacco is also sold in the form of compact packages that contain the addictive nicotine product.

Recently, a study was published in the American Journal of Pediatrics noting a 763% increase in the number of children under age six accidentally swallowing nicotine pouches. While these pouches are smoke and tobacco free, they still contain nicotine which can be toxic to young children, sometimes to the point of being deadly. They are also often sold with flavorings that are attractive to kids including fruit, mint and candy smells and flavors.

Here are a few tips to keep these dangerous products from getting into the wrong hands and mouths of children:

- ➔ Keep these and other smokeless tobacco pouches up high, out of sight and reach of young children. Keep in mind that you need to childproof for the developmental age and stage that the child is moving to and not just what they can do today. “Out of sight and reach” may mean a cabinet that is high up or it may mean something that is locked.
- ➔ Use careful disposal methods of these products so that children don’t have access to them. Be careful to not to toss them on the top of a garbage or on the ground where kids could access them.
- ➔ Use the products discretely so that children don’t see how they are placed in the mouth. Remember, they replicate the actions of adults.