



ILCAAAP

Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

Marijuana Alert - November 9, 2022



The Continued Rise of Unintentional Ingestion of Edible Cannabis in Toddlers—A Growing Public Health Concern

A 2-year-old boy presents to the pediatric emergency department (ED) for altered mental status. Prior to arrival, he was with his babysitter in a normal state of health. After questioning, the babysitter mentions rewarding him with a gummy candy for good behavior. The parents admit they have edible cannabis stored in the cupboard that looks exactly like his favorite treats, gummy bears. Almost a decade after the first states legalized the use of recreational marijuana and cannabis, **healthcare professionals have treated countless cases of children who unintentionally ingested edible cannabis products that were not stored safely.**

Cannabis is the third most commonly used psychoactive substance worldwide, with use continuously rising in the US adult population.¹ In 2019, 18% of individuals in the US reported having used cannabis products at least once.¹ As use of cannabis continues to be decriminalized and legalized across the US for adults aged 21 years and older, **there has been a concurrent increase in unintentional ingestion of cannabis edibles among children**, which raises a significant public health concern.

¹ The increase in these unintentional ingestions is likely multifactorial given the availability, variety of forms, unregulated packaging, and increased cultural acceptance of cannabis use. Medical cannabis has been legalized in most states, and recreational cannabis is decriminalized in more than half and legal in approximately one-third of states.² At the federal level,

however, recreational cannabis remains illegal to possess, use, buy, sell, or cultivate. Regardless of national legislation, cannabis has become a billion-dollar industry, and consumers are able to purchase cannabis products easily online or at dispensaries in states in which cannabis has been legalized for recreational sale. [READ](#)

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