

Marijuana Edible Products and Youth

Overview

Over 300ⁱ medical marijuana stores in King County sell edible products with no safety regulations. The Liquor Control Board has [limited regulations](#)ⁱⁱ for new recreational stores (currently only 4 stores in Central and North Seattle). Many of these products appeal to youth with attractive flavors, colors and packaging. Products include chocolates, granola bars, party mix, soda and candies. **Medical marijuana dispensaries which account for the vast majority of these stores have no regulations to prevent selling products that appeal to youth and no age restrictions.**



Health Concerns

Marijuana edible products can have extremely high amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, and the effects may take several hours to be felt, increasing the chance of overdose. Marijuana can have a harmful effect on youth's growing brains, reduce lifetime achievement, impair driving, and lead to addiction, especially among youth and long term users.ⁱⁱⁱ Marijuana edible products likely contributed to the deaths of two people in Colorado earlier this year.^{iv}

Marijuana overdoses by youth

So far in 2014 there have been 224 marijuana poisonings reported to the WA Poison Center compared to 146 during the same period in 2013 (Jan-Nov).^v Approximately half of these poisonings are among youth under age 20. King County is the County with most number of poisonings with 82 cases (adults and children) so far in 2014. Of the 82 total cases in King County, 43 involved children or young adults (<19 years). Of the 43 cases of children and young adults, 25 were between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age, 4 between the ages of 6-12 years, 11 were between the ages of 1-6 years and 3 cases were under 1 year of age.

According to their Director, Dr. Alexander Garrard, "The increasing availability of marijuana edibles and lack of child-resistant packaging may ultimately contribute to a further increasing trend in pediatric exposures."^{vi} Dr. Suzan Mazor, of Children's Hospital says their emergency room has already seen several cases of unintentional marijuana ingestion.^{vii}

Action needed

There are no reasons why marijuana products that appeal to youth should be sold. Local jurisdictions can and should pass laws to protect the health and welfare of children. The Board of Health should not wait for state action which may or may not occur while children continue to be poisoned.

We are asking the Board of Health – Seattle & King County to pass an immediate emergency ban on marijuana edible products that appeal to youth and to convene a subcommittee to consider other policy remedies.

Resources

Marijuana Mixer: Teen Use, Child Ingestion, by Dr. Wendy Sue Swanson, Seattle Children's Hospital 10/15/14. <http://seattlemamadoc.seattlechildrens.org/marijuana-mixer-teen-use-child-ingestion/>

Washington Poison Center, Toxics Trend Report, Cannabis September 2014
<http://www.wapc.org/toxic-trends-report-cannabis-october-3rd-2014/>

Washington Poison Center, Toxics Trend Report, Cannabis November 2014
<http://www.wapc.org/wp-content/uploads/WAPC-Toxic-Trends-Report-Cannabis-November.pdf>

Citations

ⁱ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/04/08/retail-marijuana-sales-in-washington-face-regulatory-delays/> and Alison Holcomb ACLU of WA.

ⁱⁱ http://www.liq.wa.gov/publications/rules/OTS-6471_1Final.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Nora D. Volkow, M.D., et.al. Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use, New England Journal of Medicine; 370:2219-2227 June 5, 2014

^{iv} Healy, Jack. After 5 Months of Sales, Colorado Sees the Downside of a Legal High. NY Times, May 31, 2014
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/after-5-months-of-sales-colorado-sees-the-downside-of-a-legal-high.html?_r=0

^v Washington Poison Center, Toxics Trend Report, Cannabis November 2014. <http://www.wapc.org/toxic-trends-report-cannabis-october-3rd-2014/>

^{vi} Washington Poison Center, Toxics Trend Report, Cannabis September 2014. <http://www.wapc.org/toxic-trends-report-cannabis-october-3rd-2014/>

^{vii} Pembroke, Meghan. More kids accidentally poisoned by legal marijuana, study finds. Children's Hospital, May 28, 2013, <http://pulse.seattlechildrens.org/more-kids-accidentally-poisoned-by-legal-marijuana-study-finds/>