

# Cannabis exposures among children

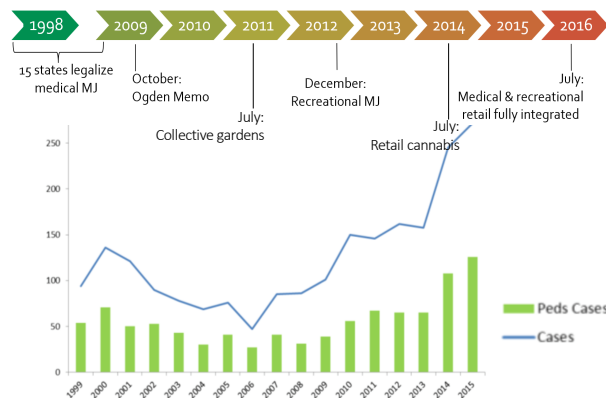
Reported to the Washington Poison Center after legalization of cannabis for adult use

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**What was previously known:** WA, CO, and OR reported increases in cannabis exposure calls since legalization and start of retail sales. Some children experienced significant harms. (CDPHE, 2016; Wang, 2017; WAPC, 2016; OHA, 2016)

## Timeline of Cannabis Legalization in Washington:



Annual Cannabis Exposure Cases from 1999 to 2015, Washington Poison Center

**Purpose:** Describe cannabis exposures among children reported to the Washington Poison Center (WAPC) after legalization to inform additional interventions

## Methods:

- **Data Source:** Washington Poison Center TOXICALL records, January 1 – December 31, 2016
- **Case Definition:**
  - Exposure event of child <12 years
  - Exposure substance: American Association of Poison Control Centers subgeneric code 083000 (Marijuana: Dried Plant)
- **Chart Review:** Structured data and redacted chart notes were used to describe patient demographics, source, specific product, intended route of administration, original intended purpose, storage location, exposure setting
- Approved by University of Washington Institutional Review Board (Study ID: STUDY00000050)

## Conclusions:

- Legalization may lead to more cannabis products in homes --> increased child exposure
- Family and caregivers were the most common source for child exposures
- Edibles were the most common product involved in child exposures
- Pediatric exposures resulted in mostly minor health effects, but occasionally result in severe health effects requiring medical intervention

## Recommendations to limit pediatric exposures:

- Discuss cannabis safety in clinical settings
  - Screen and advise safe storage during pediatric/well-child visits
  - Discuss use while breastfeeding
  - Discuss risk of treating children with cannabis for medical reasons
- Public education campaigns
  - Target all caregivers of children, including grandparents, to encourage safe practices
- Regulatory approaches
  - Limit edible products that appeal to children: colors, shapes, look alike
  - Packaging: individually wrapped servings, childproof packaging, design

## Results:

- 50 cannabis exposure calls
- Median age = 2 (88% <6 years of age)

### Exposure Circumstances:

- 100% were unintentional
- 94% occurred at home
- Among those with source information, 90% obtained from parent/grandparent

### Exposure Route & Substance:

- 86% ingestion
- 63% edibles (brownies, cookies, candy – both homemade and purchased)
- 1 case was exposed by breastfeeding, 1 by secondhand smoke exposure

### Effects of Exposure:

- 78% experienced no or minor clinical effects
- Most common symptoms were lethargy and drowsiness
- Nearly all experienced symptoms for <24 hrs
- 5 children were hospitalized; one required intensive care and intubation

## Limitations:

- PC calls likely underestimate the true number of cases, may overrepresent more severe and younger exposures
- Calls to WAPC are voluntary – fear, familiarity with THC toxicity could limit calls; legalization could reduce fear
- Generally PC calls have been declining for less severe cases of all exposure types as people use the internet
- Not all data collected per case were complete

## For More Information:

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## Acknowledgements:

Study supported in part by the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health (award 1R01DA039293). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.



In 2017, Washington's Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) began requiring this label (above), which includes the WA PC phone number, on all WA edibles packaging.