Protecting Children from Liquid Nicotine Poisoning: Messaging Guide

- As a pediatrician, I urge the FDA to take swift action to protect children from liquid nicotine poisoning.
- I am concerned about children being poisoned by liquid nicotine, a highly toxic substance that can be ingested or absorbed through the skin, mouth, and eyes. An eye-dropper bottle containing 36 mg of nicotine per milliliter of liquid would be enough nicotine to kill four toddlers. Tragically, a one-year-old boy in New York died last December from accidental exposure to liquid nicotine.
- Liquid nicotine for e-cigarettes comes in a variety of bright colors and flavors attractive to young children, including “Cotton Candy” and “Grape Bubblegum,” and is marketed using brightly colored labels depicting fruit, candy, and popular food items, increasing the likelihood that curious children will come in contact with the liquid.
- E-cigarette use continues to increase dramatically, exposing more and more children to this alarming poisoning hazard.
- A recent study of people who use e-cigarettes and live in households with children showed just how ubiquitous these products have become and how easily accessible they are to children. 36% of those surveyed did not use child-resistant packaging or otherwise lock up liquid nicotine in containers that were difficult for children to access, and 13% reported storing liquid nicotine on an open counter.
- There is currently no federal requirement that liquid nicotine containers have child-resistant packaging.
- Child-resistant packaging is among the most effective and time-tested methods for protecting children, and especially small children, from poisoning hazards.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has clear authority under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act to regulate tobacco products to prevent child poisoning.
- The FDA must publish a proposed rule as soon as possible requiring child-resistant packaging, including flow restrictors, and nicotine exposure warnings that specifically highlight the risk of harm to children on liquid nicotine containers.
- The FDA should also consider other measures to protect children from the harms of liquid nicotine poisoning, including the use of graphics on warning labels, regulating the use of packaging and flavors attractive to children, and limiting the concentration and quantity of liquid nicotine per unit sold.
- Please act quickly to prevent further harm to children.

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