

Doctors warn about camphor poisoning in children

April 27 2009, By LINDSEY TANNER , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- Doctors are warning parents to avoid using imported camphor products after poisonings in several New York City children.

The alert is in a report in the May issue of the [journal Pediatrics](#) about three toddlers who suffered seizures in January 2008. They had either eaten camphor products, inhaled camphor or had it rubbed on them as a cold remedy. The products included folk remedies, pesticides and air fresheners. The [children](#) were treated at a Bronx hospital and recovered.

Several other children developed similar symptoms but authorities were unable to confirm if camphor was the culprit, said Dr. Hnin Khine. She is an emergency room physician at Children's Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx who treated the three youngsters described in Pediatrics.

The products are made from the wood of evergreen camphor trees that are native to Japan and China, or from synthetics.

Camphor has a strong odor and is used in mothballs. Vicks VapoRub also contains camphor, in low, government-approved doses, although the label advises against use in children younger than 2.

The products implicated in the poisonings were imported white cubes or tablets and contained doses higher than U.S. regulations allow, Khine said.

They're widely available in ethnic pharmacies and discount stores,

sometimes labeled "alcanfor," the Spanish word for camphor.

Camphor is easily absorbed by the skin and nose. Young children are especially vulnerable. [Poisoning](#) symptoms can include stomach aches, nausea, vomiting and irritability.

On the Net:

Pediatrics: <http://www.aap.org/>

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