

# **New study finds laundry detergent packets more dangerous than other types of detergent**

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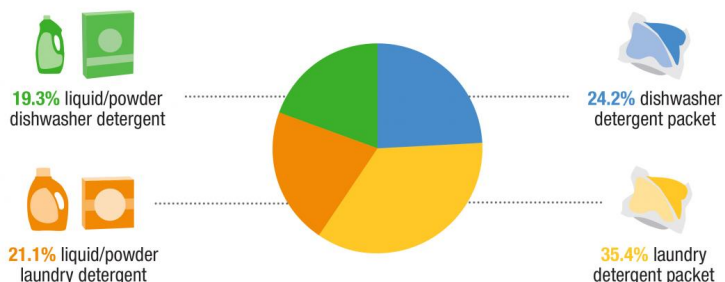
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# Detergent Packet Dangers



Poison control centers received more than **62,000 calls** related to laundry and dishwasher detergent exposures among children younger than 6 years old (January 2013- December 2014).

## Types of Detergent Exposures



Detergent packets accounted for 59.6% of all exposures.

## Know the Risks



Of all calls to poison control centers concerning detergent, more than 40% resulted in medical side-effects (e.g., eye pain and irritation, drowsiness, vomiting, coughing/choking, coma, breathing failure, or death).



**86.2%**  
of exposures were children younger than 3 years old.



The risk of being admitted to a health care facility was significantly higher for children exposed to laundry detergent packets than those exposed to traditional laundry detergent.

## Safety Precautions



If there is a child younger than 6 years old in your home, use traditional laundry detergent instead of laundry detergent packets.



Laundry detergent should be stored up, away and out of sight. Laundry detergent packets should be stored in a locked cabinet.



If you think a child has come into contact with the contents of a laundry detergent packet, call poison control at 1-800-222-1222.



Save the Poison Help Line number in your cell phone and post it in your home.

*Study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Central Ohio Poison Center. The study used data from the National Poison Data System which collects data from calls to participating poison control centers that serve the U.S. and its territories.*



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Know the facts about laundry detergent safety and take these safety precautions.  
Credit: Nationwide Children's Hospital

A new study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Central Ohio Poison Center found that exposure to laundry detergent packets is more dangerous to young children than exposure to other types of laundry and dishwasher detergent.

The study, published online today in *Pediatrics*, found that from January 2013 through December 2014 Poison Control Centers in the U.S. received 62,254 calls related to laundry and dishwasher detergent exposures among children younger than 6 years old. The study included calls about both traditional detergent and detergent packets and found that detergent packets accounted for 60 percent of all calls. Almost half (45 percent) of the calls for exposure to [laundry detergent](#) packets were referred to a health care facility for evaluation and treatment, significantly more than calls related to exposures to traditional laundry detergent (17 percent), traditional dishwasher detergent (four percent), or dishwasher detergent packets (five percent).

Incidents related to laundry detergent packets saw the biggest rise - increasing 17 percent over the two year study period. Poison control centers received more than 30 calls a day about children who had been exposed to a laundry detergent packet, which is about one call every 45 minutes.

In addition, the most serious clinical effects such as coma, trouble breathing, heart problems, and death, were only seen in children exposed

to the chemicals in laundry detergent packets. The risks of having a clinical effect, a serious medical outcome, hospitalization, or intubation were significantly higher for children who had been exposed to the chemicals in a laundry detergent packet than for those exposed to any other type of laundry or dishwasher detergent. At least one child a day in the U.S. was admitted to the hospital due to a laundry detergent packet exposure. The two child deaths in this study were both associated with exposure to laundry detergent packets.

In an effort to reduce unintentional exposures to the contents of laundry detergent packets, ASTM published a voluntary Standard Safety Specification for Liquid Laundry Packets in 2015, but some experts feel it did not go far enough.

"This voluntary standard is a good first step, but it needs to be strengthened," said Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, the senior author of the study and director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "Unless this unacceptably high number of exposures declines dramatically, manufacturers need to continue to find ways to make this product and its packaging safer for children."

Experts recommend that families with children younger than 6 years old use traditional detergent instead of packets. "Many families don't realize how toxic these highly concentrated laundry detergent packets are," says Marcel J. Casavant, MD a co-author of the study, chief of toxicology at Nationwide Children's Hospital and medical director of the Central Ohio Poison Center. "Use traditional laundry detergent when you have young kids in your home. It isn't worth the risk when there is a safer and effective alternative available."

Parents and child caregivers can help children stay safer by following these tips:

- People who have young [children](#) that live in or visit their home should use traditional laundry detergent, which is much less toxic than laundry detergent packets.
- Store all laundry detergent including packets up, away, and out of sight - in a locked cabinet is best for laundry packets.
- Close laundry detergent packet packages or containers and put them away immediately after use.
- Save the national Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) in your cell phone and post it near your home phones.

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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