

FDA warns of dangers of liquid nitrogen in food, drinks

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(HealthDay)—You risk serious injury if you consume or handle food

and drink products where liquid nitrogen is added just before consumption, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned Friday.

These products—which have names such as "Dragon's Breath," "Heaven's Breath" and "nitro puff"—are available in food courts, kiosks, state or local fairs, and other places where food and drinks are sold.

Examples of such products include [liquid nitrogen](#)-infused colorful cereal or cheese puffs that emit a misty or smoke-like vapor, and alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks prepared with liquid nitrogen that emit a fog.

Liquid nitrogen isn't toxic, but its extremely low temperature can cause severe damage to skin and internal organs if mishandled or consumed, the FDA said in a news release. Inhaling the vapor released by liquid nitrogen in food or drinks can also cause breathing problems, especially among people with asthma, according to the agency.

"The main issue is that liquid nitrogen must be fully evaporated from food or beverage before it is served," explained Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency room physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"In liquid form, it can cause burns to the mouth, esophagus and upper airway, leading to perforation or rupture of the organs—which could be deadly," Glatter said. "It may also cause burns of the fingers or hands when it is handled in the [liquid state](#)."

And people with asthma or lung disease who inhale the vapors might experience constriction of their airways, triggering an asthma attack or worsening of their [lung disease](#), he added.

"Beyond this, it may also lead to inflammation in the lungs and

aspiration, which can reduce the ability to breathe, as well as trigger infections such as pneumonia," Glatter said.

In fact, the FDA said it has received reports of severe and life-threatening injuries caused by liquid nitrogen in food and drinks, and also reports of [breathing problems](#).

"With state fairs upon us, parents and teens need to understand the potential risks of foods such as nitro popcorn and nitrogen-infused cereals, which promise excitement and thrill but may end with a trip to the emergency department," Glatter noted.

People who've suffered an injury after handling or consuming [food](#) or drinks prepared with liquid nitrogen should consult a [health care provider](#), and also consider reporting their injury to MedWatch, the FDA's safety reporting program, the agency said.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more on [food safety](#).

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