

## **Detergent Pods**

### **What are detergent pods?**

Detergent pods, also known by the names “liquid laundry detergent capsules” or “laundry packets” are capsules containing concentrated forms of liquid detergent. They are marketed from many manufacturers for their ease of use and quick solubility when exposed to water. They come in various forms of packaging and colors.

### **Why are they dangerous to children?**

Detergent pods are sold in flashy attractive colors and shapes, giving them the appearance of candies or small toys. This can put younger children at more risk, especially those less than three years of age who explore things with their mouth, out of curiosity or at times of teething.

Detergent pods have an extremely concentrated liquid detergent wrapped in a water-soluble polyvinyl alcohol membrane. The detergent is released from the membrane when it contacts moisture or is chewed or broken open. This membrane is very fragile and breaks open easily from the slightest pressure or very little moisture. When released, the detergent contents are caustic and can result in chemical burns. In addition to the caustic detergent, these pods often contain various alcohols which are toxic when absorbed into the blood stream.

When ingested, detergent pods can cause chemical burns to the mouth, airway, food pipe, stomach, and bowels. In addition, ingestion can lead to absorption of the various alcohols which may cause lethargy and metabolic acidosis in severe cases.

Topical exposure of a ruptured detergent pod may cause chemical burns to the eyes and skin. Eyes are particularly sensitive to the chemical irritation of the detergent pod contents. Plus, breaking open a pod under pressure can release and propel the contents into the eye.

### **What should I do if my child has swallowed a detergent pod?**

If your child has swallowed or chewed a detergent pod, bring him/her to a health care facility immediately. A small amount of water can be given to carefully rinse out the mouth if possible. Do not induce vomiting or allow your child to eat or drink until further evaluation by a health care provider.

### **What if my child’s eyes or skin are exposed to the contents?**

If eyes are exposed, wash them immediately with clean water. If any part of the skin is involved, remove any clothing that may have been contaminated with the detergent and thoroughly wash the area with soap and water.

Skin exposures alone rarely cause any significant injury. Most skin exposures may remain at home. No systemic toxicity is expected from only skin contact. However, eye exposures may require a visit to the nearest health care facility for further assessment and treatment. If an eye is red, irritated and developing any pain or blurriness, an evaluation by a health care provider is recommended.

*For more information or advice, you may contact your local Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.*

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