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**TOX ALERT**

LI REGIONAL POISON & DRUG INFORMATION CENTER 2010: #1

Smokeless Tobacco Products can poison kids

A new generation of smokeless, flavored tobacco products that look like breath mints or breath-freshening strips may be life-threatening for children who mistake them for candy according to a new study. There were 1,768 cases reported involving smokeless tobacco products out of a total of 13,705 cases of tobacco ingestions in children < 6 years of age reported by 61 Poison Centers between the years 2006-2008 in the US (1). Over 70% involved infants under a year of age. In addition to conventional smokeless tobacco products, novel smokeless tobacco products such as Camel Orbs®, which resemble breath mints (see picture); Camel Sticks®, which are about the size of a toothpick and dissolve in the mouth; and Camel Strips®, which are similar to breath-freshening strips are a new generation of smokeless products being pilot tested in some cities which can be especially hazardous. Small, teabag-like "snus" pouches filled with tobacco that are placed between the upper lip and gum are also a potential hazard (2). Infants and small children are susceptible to unintentional tobacco ingestion because of natural curiosity, a tendency for oral exploration and an attraction to candy-like appearance and added flavorings. Ingestion of as little as 1 mg of nicotine by a small child can produce nausea and vomiting. Severe toxic effects of nicotine poisoning can result in convulsions, respiratory failure, and even death. The purposeful ingestion of smokeless tobacco products by teens is also of concern. The use of smokeless tobacco products among adolescents has increased 6% per year from 2002 to 2006. This is of concern because adolescents may think it is harmless and may not realize that they could be setting themselves up for developing a nicotine addiction (2). 1) Connolly GN et al. Pediatri 125, 896-899. 2) Mann D. Health.com 2010, April 19, 2010

The Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center is available 24 hrs a day, 7 days/week, to answer questions about smokeless tobacco or any other substance that could be harmful to your health.