

Pediatric Cannabis Exposures

Edible cannabis formulations (candies, baked goods, oils) are available both commercially and homemade.

The THC and/or CBD content of edible formulations can be highly variable, even when labelled with commercial packaging.

Clinical Symptoms:

Pediatric exposures are known to have a distinctly different clinical presentation compared to adult exposures. Symptoms of exposure vary from asymptomatic to agitation to coma. Some patients have required intubation and monitoring in an ICU.

Vomiting	Lethargy
Agitation	Hypotonia
Confusion	Respiratory depression and apnea
Slurred speech	Coma
Ataxia	Seizures (rare)

Management of ASYMPTOMATIC patients:

1. Monitor for 6 hours post-exposure.
2. If asymptomatic at 6 hours post-exposure, including normal vital signs and normal GCS, patient can be safely discharged.

*Appropriate judgment should be used by bedside staff re. level of consciousness if planning to discharge a patient overnight.

3. Bloodwork and urine toxicology screening are not routinely recommended.

Management of SYMPTOMATIC patients:

1. Consider bloodwork in the following scenarios: patients with significantly decreased level of consciousness, abnormal vital signs, vomiting, unclear history of exposure.
CBC, electrolytes, glucose, creatinine, BUN AST, ALT, bilirubin, VBG, lactate, serum ethanol concentration, serum osmolality
2. A urine toxicology screen is not routinely recommended.
A urine toxicology screen can confirm the presence of cannabinoid metabolites in the urine. There are false positives and false negatives associated with the urine immunoassay test. Contact the Ontario Poison Centre if concern with test interpretation.
3. Continue to monitor patients in hospital until **all symptoms resolve**.
Symptom duration is typically 4-8 hours, although is occasionally more than 24 hours in this population.
4. Discharge is appropriate when patient has returned to baseline, has normal vital signs and is asymptomatic (no vomiting, weakness, hallucinations).

Resources for Parents:

Health Canada "Thinking about Using Cannabis While Parenting?"

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/documents/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-while-parenting-eng.pdf>



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