



July 27, 2009

2009 DOHMH Health Advisory # 30

Acute Bromide Toxicity in Child Associated with Use of Cordial de Monell, an Illegal Teething Product

- Health care providers should advise parents not to use Cordial de Monell, an illegal teething product, which contains potassium bromide.
- Health care providers should counsel parents on the potential dangers of imported health care products, including Cordial de Monell.
- Health care providers should report all known or suspected poisonings by calling the New York City Poison Control Center 24 hours a day/7 days a week at (212) POISONS (764-7667).

Please Distribute to All Clinical Staff in Primary Care, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Neurology and Critical Care. Please also share with your non-hospital based primary care colleagues.

Dear Provider,

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Poison Control Center (PCC) was recently notified of acute bromide toxicity in a 22-day old infant, found to be associated with the use of a locally purchased teething product called Monell's Teething Cordial (a.k.a. Cordial de Monell para la Dentición). This product is imported from the Dominican Republic and sold illegally in NYC. It contains potassium bromide, a potent sedative. The product is typically used for teething discomfort, colic and GI symptoms.

A 22-day old generally healthy infant presented to a local pediatric emergency department for excessive sleepiness and decreased oral intake over the prior 48 hours. The parents had purchased Cordial de Monell for "colic" at a local pharmacy. They had been adding it to each of her meals over the 12 days prior to onset of her symptoms. On presentation, she was found to be lethargic with hypotonia and was admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Other medical causes of her symptoms were excluded while she was managed with aggressive IV fluid hydration for presumed bromide toxicity. On day five after hospitalization, she was discharged home after a gradual resolution of her symptoms.

Acute effects from bromide ingestion may include tachycardia, respiratory distress, hypotension, CNS depression, and coma. Chronic ingestion of bromides may lead to "bromism," characterized in older children and adults by behavioral changes, irritability, headache, confusion, anorexia, slurred speech, and lethargy, and usually develops after 2-4 weeks. Note that nausea and vomiting can be seen following both acute and chronic ingestion.

Product Recall:

On April 8, 2009, Castillo Distributor Inc., the distributor of Cordial de Monell, issued a nationwide voluntary recall of Cordial de Monell. Castillo has urged customers to discontinue its use and return the product to the store where it was purchased. Store owners should segregate the recalled product and arrange for return of the product to the distributor. For details, see: <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/Recalls/ArchiveRecalls/2009/ucm135958.htm>.

Imported Medicine Products:

In New York City, families may treat their children with imported health remedies and herbal medicine products. These imported products may have been brought into the United States by family members, sold illegally in neighborhood stores or purchased over the internet. Such products may contain harmful ingredients and may not have been approved for sale by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). Also, NYC DOHMH has identified many products which are known to contain lead, mercury or arsenic. See <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/lead-herbalmed.pdf>. (Note: this is not a comprehensive list of all products which may contain harmful substances.)

DOHMH recommends that health care providers ask patients about their use of prescription medicines as well as non-prescription health remedies including supplements, vitamins, tonics, and other herbal or mineral products. If a patient reports using imported health remedies, providers should consider the possibility that these products may contain harmful ingredients. Consider testing your patients for lead and other heavy metals if products such as the ones listed in the reference above are used. However, the above referenced list is not comprehensive and health care providers should maintain a high index of suspicion in symptomatic children. Consideration of testing patients for lead or other heavy metals should be done in consultation with the New York City Poison Control Center. Call the New York City Poison Control Center 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 212-POISONS or 800-222-1222.

Report All Poisonings:

Report all cases of known or suspected poisonings to the New York City Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS or 800-222-1222 as required by the New York City Health Code.

Anticipatory Guidance for Parents:

Counsel all parents to:

- Stop using Cordial de Monell, keep it out of the reach of children.
- Discuss treatments for colic and teething discomfort with your health care provider.
- Beware of the potential danger of using imported products; they may not be safe or FDA-approved.
- Never use products that are sold without labels.
- Any time you suspect a poisoning or have a question about toxic substances call the Poison Control Center 24 hours a day at:
 - English-speaking callers, call: (212) POISONS (764-7667)
 - Spanish-speaking callers, call: (212) VENENOS (836-3667).

As always, we appreciate our ongoing partnership with healthcare providers in New York City in reporting cases of poisonings.

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