

# Child Dies After Eating Laundry Packet

by SERENA NG

An infant in central Florida died last week after accidentally eating a packet of concentrated laundry detergent, the state's Department of Children and Families said Thursday.

The death of the 7-month-old boy is believed to be the first associated with single-dose liquid detergent packets, which have been involved in a rash of unintentional ingestion by babies and toddlers since becoming widely available in the U.S. early last year. It heightens the stakes as consumer-products companies such as [Procter & Gamble Co.](#) [PG -0.34%](#) try to stop the problem by modifying their packaging and warning consumers.



The brand of detergent in the Florida case was All Mighty Pacs Free & Clear, made by Sun Products Corp., people familiar with the matter said. The detergent packets were colorless.

Kathryn Corbally, Sun Products' director of corporate affairs, said the company hadn't been notified directly by authorities but had heard that its product was involved. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the child who died," Ms. Corbally said. She said the company takes safety seriously.

Since the start of this year, poison-control centers across the country have reported 5,753 cases of children 5 years old and under being accidentally exposed to single-dose

detergent packets made by companies including P&G, [Henkel AG HEN3.XE -0.70%](#) and others. That was close to the 6,231 cases reported for all of last year.

Some poison-center directors have cited the laundry packets' resemblance to candy as a factor in some accidents. In many cases, parents or caregivers left the detergent packets within reach of their children, who swallowed the detergent or got it in their eyes when thin films encasing the highly concentrated liquid burst.

Some of the injuries have been serious, causing symptoms such as vomiting, lethargy, breathing difficulties and corneal abrasions. Some children had to be hospitalized for days and intubated to help them breathe. Until the Florida incident, however, none was known to have died.

The Florida incident was reported earlier by the Orlando Sentinel. It involved a baby boy and his mother, who were staying in a shelter for battered women, according to the article. The mother had placed detergent packets inside a laundry basket on a bed, stepped away and when she returned, found her son eating the detergent, the newspaper reported.

Cynthia Lewis-Younger, medical director of the Florida Poison Information Center in Tampa, declined to comment on the case but said her center has received 309 reports of accidents involving young children and concentrated laundry detergent packets since May 2012.

"We see a lot of exposures happening to children with products left within their reach," she said. "And kids who are young, up to three to four years of age, will put just about everything in their mouth."

Detergent makers have been attempting to reduce the risk of their products to children. P&G, which sells Tide Pods detergent packets, has been phasing in opaque containers to help keep the packets out of children's sight. Henkel, with its Purex brand, and other rivals have been doing the same.

Sun Products, based in Wilton, Conn., has said that the company began moving from transparent to opaque pouches and tubs this year and is expecting to introduce a "child deterrent tub closure" next year.

Companies have also placed additional warnings on their packaging and are working with various industry groups to educate parents on how to store and handle their products safely.

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