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NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF CANNABIS MANAGEMENT URGES SAFE CANNABIS STORAGE DURING NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK, MARCH 15–21, 2026

Statewide Partners Highlight Simple Steps Families Should Take to Protect Children and Pets from Unintentional Cannabis Exposure

ALBANY, N.Y. — In recognition of National Poison Prevention Week, the New York State Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) is teaming up once again with state partners to underscore the importance of safe cannabis storage and poison prevention. OCM urges adults who consume cannabis to protect what matters by safely storing cannabis products locked, out of sight, and out of reach from children and pets, who are especially vulnerable to the effects of cannabis, sometimes requiring medical treatment.

"Protecting New York's families continues to be a top priority as the legal cannabis market continues to mature," **said John Kagia, Acting Executive Director of the Office of Cannabis Management**. "By promoting safe storage practices and clear guidance about responsible cannabis use, we can help prevent unintentional exposures and support the health and safety of communities across the state."

"As cannabis becomes more common in our communities, safe storage must become just as common in our homes. Keeping products locked, out of sight, and in their original packaging can prevent avoidable emergencies. Prevention begins at home." **said Dr. June Chin, Chief Medical Officer at OCM.**

During National Poison Prevention week, OCM joins The New York State Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Upstate New York Poison Center, and the New York City Poison Center, and poison prevention partners statewide to raise awareness and remind New Yorkers that responsible storage of cannabis products is essential to protect families.

All regulated cannabis products sold in New York are required to be packaged in child-resistant containers. However, safe storage at home remains essential.

Key safety recommendations include:

- Store cannabis products securely— locked and out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Keep cannabis products in their original child-resistant packaging.
- Store cannabis products separately from regular foods and drinks, and away from common household areas.
- Make sure parents, grandparents, caregivers, and other trusted adults understand the potential risks associated with unintentional cannabis exposure.
- Use lock bags or boxes or other secure storage tools to reduce access.
- Properly dispose of cannabis packaging and waste. Discard cannabis waste - such as residue from concentrates on Q-tips, cigarette butts, and edibles) -in a trash container with a closed lid, out of reach of young people or pets.

New York State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said, "Just like any medication, cannabis should be stored in a safe place, out of the reach of children and pets. In 2024 there were nearly 670 emergency department visits for cannabis-related poisonings involving children ages 0-17 in New York State. The Department works closely with our partners at the Office of Cannabis Management and across state government to ensure all New Yorkers have access to clear guidance on safe storage and prevention. Families are encouraged to have open conversations with one another and with their health care provider and to follow key safety recommendations when storing cannabis products."

OASAS Commissioner Dr. Chinazo Cunningham said, "Underage cannabis use can lead to a variety of health problems, and this is an important reminder to keep these products away from those who should not have access by keeping them secured and out of sight. OASAS works closely with the Office of Cannabis Management on educational efforts to inform New Yorkers about potential risks of cannabis products and prevent accidental poisoning, and we urge all New Yorkers to take these important steps to keep their families safe."

Upstate NY Poison Center Medical Director Vincent Calleo, MD, said, "In 2025, the Upstate New York Poison Center received over 200 calls where pediatric patients were exposed to edible cannabis products. Cannabis can be especially dangerous to young children, and effects can range from sleepiness to decreased breathing, slow heart rates, seizures, and coma. Taking simple steps, including storing any edible cannabis products out of sight and using medication lock boxes, are ways to help decrease poisonings and keep children safe."

NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Alister Martin said, "Cannabis products can look like everyday foods or snacks, which increases the risk of unintentional exposure for children. Safe storage, keeping cannabis locked, out of sight, and in its original packaging, can prevent these exposures. If a child may have consumed cannabis or another potentially harmful substance, contact the NYC Poison Center at 212-POISONS (212-764-7667) right away for fast, expert guidance. Protecting the health and safety of our youngest New Yorkers starts at home, and together, we can prevent emergencies before they happen."

New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden said, “Children have the natural inclination to explore, and this exploration may be through touch and taste. Nearly 23% of children who accidentally ingested cannabis needed to be hospitalized. Therefore, the Office of Children and Family Services appreciates the Office of Cannabis Management’s preventative measures to increase awareness on the safe storage of cannabis.”

To further advance safety education, Governor Hochul has proposed a Center of Excellence for Medical Cannabis and Health Equity in her 2026 State of the State. This first in the nation Center will train clinicians on cannabis pharmacology, evidence-based care, and patient counseling. Developed in partnership with medical schools and residency programs, the Center will expand access to therapeutic care and help close longstanding disparities in medical cannabis treatment to train clinicians on cannabis pharmacology, evidence-based care, and patient counseling.

During Poison Prevention Week OCM is giving away 10 lockbags from March 15-20. To enter, simply answer the question, *“How do you practice safe storage for your cannabis products?”* by submitting your response here. Winners will be selected and announced on OCM socials on Monday, March 23.

National Poison Prevention Week was established by the U.S. Congress in 1961 to help communities reduce injuries from poisonings and raise awareness of poison safety.

Poison Control remains a vital resource for questions and emergency support during any poisoning concern. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at no cost, anonymously, by calling 1-800-222-1222.

Follow OCM on social media for safety tips, resources, and community engagement throughout National Poison Prevention Week. And visit the Cannabis Education Library for more information about safe cannabis storage and other cannabis topics.

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