

Drug and Poison Information Center  
(DPIC)

# DrugScope

Spring 2013

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# Device to Inhale Alcohol Vapors Causes Concern

Sara Stover, PharmD

The public is being warned about a new device, Vaportini, which provides a way to inhale alcohol for absorption directly into the bloodstream creating an instant high. Since the alcohol does not have to be absorbed through the digestive tract, the effects of the alcohol can be felt immediately. Due to this rapid effect, inhaling alcohol may be more addictive than drinking alcohol. Inhaling alcohol directly into the bloodstream also bypasses the body's natural defenses against toxicity (e.g. vomiting). The device is readily available for purchase over the internet and is currently legal to sell in all states. There is concern about abuse of the product and the unknown effects of inhaling alcohol.

The Vaportini device has been used by its developer in her Chicago bar since 2010. It became available for purchase online in December 2012 for \$30. The Vaportini works by using a tea light candle, a standard pint glass, a metal ring and a glass globe. Liquor is added to the glass globe. The candle heats the liquor and after approximately 4-5 minutes the alcohol vapors can be inhaled. This is too specific – sounds like we are telling people how to do it.

Dr. Thomas Greenfield, Center Director at the National Alcohol Research Center in Emeryville, California, is quoted in an online article expressing concerns about the device. He states that this delivery method may make it difficult to self-regulate alcohol consumption, especially for teenagers. He also notes that he is not aware of any human studies on the effects on inhaling alcohol. Animal studies of rats in alcohol vapor chambers show high levels of intoxication and addiction.

A similar device, Alcohol Without Liquid (AWOL) device, mechanically vaporizes alcohol shots and is banned in 22 states. There are currently no bans of the Vaportini device, but this does not mean that it is FDA approved or proven safe. Individuals and organizations involved with addiction and recovery express concerns about the Vaportini device. Parents especially should be aware of the existence and potential dangers of this device.



## References:

1. <http://www.vaportini.com/home.html> accessed on April 1, 2013
2. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2262311/Parents-horror-new-35-device-lets-INHALE-alcohol-goes-sale-U-S.html> accessed on April 1, 2013

# What's in Your Pocket?

Robyn E. Davis MSN, RN II, CSPI

In a recent episode of a popular TV show, a new product called Grinds® Coffee Pouches became a topic of discussion. It is marketed as an energy product that is a “healthy alternative to tobacco for professional baseball players.” Although it was created for professional baseball players, this product appears to be available to anyone for purchase on the company’s website. Their slogan is “Coffee in your pocket. Enjoy.”

The suggested use of Grinds® pouches is to place 1 or 2 pouches between the cheek and gums. Maximum absorption occurs if the saliva is swallowed rather than spit out. Once the pouch loses flavor, it should be thrown away. Each Grinds® can holds 20 pouches. It is estimated that each can contains a caffeine equivalent of 4-5 cups of coffee, with each pouch equivalent to ¼ cup of coffee. The exact amount of caffeine in each pouch is not available. The product contains other energy boosting ingredients such as B-Vitamins and guarana (a potent source of caffeine), that the manufacturer claim increases energy without jitteriness that typically accompanies caffeine. The company compares Grinds® pouches to 5-Hour Energy and Red Bull, but without the calories, carbonation and liquid. According to the website for Grinds® pouches, they are not meant to be swallowed but they go on to say that “there is no serious danger in swallowing an actual pouch.”

Caffeine is a stimulant that is found in chocolate, soda, coffee, and tea. It is commonly used to increase energy and alertness. When too much caffeine is ingested, it can lead to symptoms such as nausea/vomiting, agitation, increased heart rate, changes in heart rhythm, and seizures. Some people may be sensitive to even small amounts of caffeine especially children who are very susceptible to the side effects as they lack a tolerance to caffeine.

Doses of caffeine greater than 100-200mg per day may lead to toxicity. If the Grinds® pouches contain the equivalent of a ¼ cup of coffee of caffeine, that could be approximately 50mg of caffeine per pouch. This suggests that more than 2-4 pouches a day may cause toxicity. .

The Grinds® pouches raise serious concern for healthcare professionals. The manufacturer doesn’t provide a specific amount of caffeine per pouch; therefore it is unknown how much caffeine is potentially being absorbed into the body. This makes it difficult to determine the safety of this product in both adult use and accidental pediatric exposures. Overuse is a large concern as there has not been a maximum pouch per day established. Although the company does not consider the pouches to be a serious danger if swallowed, healthcare professionals consider these a choking hazard and a gastrointestinal obstruction risk for children.

Reference: <http://getgrinds.com/>



# Awarerx.org

Christy Geis

AWARERX.ORG is an informational website promoting awareness about the alarming trend of prescription drug abuse. This resource is pertinent to parents, caregivers, corporations and health care professionals.

AWARERX.ORG educates about the misuse and abuse of prescription medication trends and encourages people to get involved and educate the public by sharing their own or their family's story of struggle with prescription drug abuse. Corporations can order Corporate Ad Communication kits (flyers, posters, stickers, and other corporate ad communications) in addition to hats, shirts, pill boxes to help raise awareness among employees and their families.

AWARERX.ORG promotes understanding about using and administering your family's medication as well as appropriately obtaining medication through the pharmacy and legitimate websites. Proper disposal of old medication is a popular question addressed for many environmentally conscientious people and health care professionals. The website gives 3 eco-friendly options: local disposal program & police department drop boxes; FDA guidelines for proper medication disposal; and collection sites for the Drug Take-Back Day. **The National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day is being held on April 27, 2013.**

Another educational tool is the discussion of places to go for local Drug Awareness Events. The website encourages people to contact AWARERX.ORG at any time to answer questions or supply additional information. Sign up to receive the AWAR<sub>x</sub>E Newsletter at AWARERX.ORG.

Recent news and recent events from reliable resources by the FDA, NIDA, DEA and Healthcare Providers provide information about laws, studies, safety recommendations/tips, and drug warnings.

“More than 50% of people aged 12 and older who abused prescription drugs in 2010 and 2011 got them from friends or family for free.” Per Awarerx.org.

# National Prevention Week 2013

**National Prevention Week** is a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) supported annual health observance dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, substance abuse and mental health issues. This observance is an opportunity to join with other individuals, organizations, and coalitions in the community to promote prevention efforts; educate others about behavioral health issues; and create and strengthen community partnerships.

National Prevention Week will take place from May 12<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>. This year's theme is "Your Voice- Your Choice: Make a difference". With our voices- whether spoken or written- we can raise awareness of substance abuse and behavioral health issues. Through our choices we can set an example of health and well-being for others.

The DPIC education and outreach team has planned the following activities for National Prevention Week:

- I. Distribution of materials to address underage drinking
- II. Training of Trainers regarding the fundamentals of prevention
- III. Increase awareness and provide support to community service agencies, parents and others specific to preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health

If you have questions about prevention science and/or National Prevention Week contact the Education and Outreach team of DPIC at 636-5095.

2013 national  
prevention  
week  
MAY 12-18

Your voice.  
Your choice.  
**Make a difference.**

# MOLLY

## (Not Just the Name of My Cat)

Jan Scaglione, MT, PharmD, D.ABAT

In recent years, the term “Molly” has been associated with a pure crystalline form of MDMA or ecstasy, most often sold as a powder filled capsule. The slang term came from the longer word ‘molecular’ and referred to an unadulterated MDMA. At the point Molly came to the drug scene, drug users were often aware that their ecstasy tablets were being “cut with” a number of other drugs, and the drug effect was not as reliable as it had been when ecstasy was a new drug on the street. In general MDMA acts as a psychoactive stimulant and hallucinogen, and has been widely used in raves and among popular young music artists. Dangerous elevations of body temperature under the influence of MDMA have been reported commonly with use, as has severe depression, sleep problems, and anxiety. Combination of ecstasy and other drugs, including alcohol, increases the risk for a deleterious outcome, including stroke and death.

Molly became instantly popular with users attempting to get away from the ecstasy tablets that contained anything from caffeine to methamphetamine. A harm reduction website that tests ecstasy tablets sent in by users ([www.ecstasydata.org](http://www.ecstasydata.org)) frequently reports 4 or 5 other drugs in a single tablet sold as ecstasy. Capsules of Molly have been sent for testing by users too, and it may not come as a surprise that what was once thought of as a pure, unadulterated MDMA, is now being substituted or adulterated just like ecstasy tablets have been over the past decade. The drug currently being substituted, methylone is a more harmful drug having even more dangerous side effects than pure MDMA.

Methylone is one of the synthetic drugs sold over the last 3 years under the innocuous names of “bath salts”, “plant food”, “glass cleaner”, “insect repellent” and many others. Methylone, sold as Molly, has shown up in capsules tested from New York, Florida, Arkansas, Massachusetts, California, and Arizona to date (as of April 12, 2013). Methylone, a synthetic psychoactive stimulant, is related to the natural stimulant cathinone, found in the Khat plant native to Eastern Africa. There have been reports of desired effects of euphoria, increased energy, and sex drive with use of synthetic cathinones, but there have been many undesired effects recorded too. Increased paranoia, agitated delirium, vivid, scary hallucinations, psychotic episodes, violent or destructive self-harm behavior, including death, have also been described by users, or those that have found the user during or after use of synthetic cathinones.

The bottom line here is that the drug Molly is no longer just a pure form of MDMA ecstasy, but may be a drug that is even more harmful than ecstasy itself.



# Community Outreach and Education Unit

2012 accomplishments

Community outreach and education of the DPIC implements programming to promote healthy drug-free lifestyles. Program services involve youth, parents, and members of the community. The staff includes prevention specialists and other professionals (e.g. health educators, pharmacists, other health care professionals, and law enforcement officers) who also serve as positive role models in the community. In the last year over 27,000 individuals in Hamilton County have benefited from services provided including delinquency prevention and violence prevention issues among African-American youth populations.

This past year the program was significantly involved with Police Chief James Craig's Children in Trauma Intervention Camp. Additionally the Office of National Drug Control Policies has supported a People of Color Wellness Alliance Coalition Grant and a Grassroots Urban Mobilization Benefiting Ohio initiative to respond to health disparities and wellness issues prevalent among African American and other minorities in Hamilton County. Furthermore, DPIC was honored by a visit from the Drug Czar (Gil Kerlikowske) who held a press conference here to announce the nation's new drug policy. The Center was also awarded a UC College of Pharmacy Training Fellowship to host a pharmacy student for the summer.



Gil Kerlikowske

## Rescheduling of hydrocodone?

The FDA's Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee have voted to recommend rescheduling of hydrocodone from Schedule III to Schedule II. The FDA will consider its advisory committee's recommendation and make its final recommendation to the DEA. If the FDA recommends rescheduling the DEA would have to go through a rulemaking process to propose rescheduling. Stay tuned.....



# School Daze

Tisha Carson RPh, CSPI



While the teachers are teaching students about the three Rs (reading, 'righting and 'rithmetic) the students' peers are teaching them about ways to get high and dangerous "games." These behaviors are perpetuated by videos on the internet.

Tweens and teens willingly share information about ways of getting high such as:

- **Huffing**, purposeful inhaling of propellants or fumes of common household items like spray paint, air fresheners and duster sprays.
- **Synthetic drugs**, such as K 2 and Spice, which produces marijuana-like symptoms and cargo ones, commonly called Bath Salts, which produce stimulant type symptoms.
- **Prescriptions drugs**, particularly oxycodone and hydrocodone.
- **Alcohol**- which can have an impact on learning because the brain is still developing the frontal lobe (responsible for decision making and impulse control) until about 25 years of age. **Hand sanitizers** contain alcohol. Students have been known to challenge each other to drink it or may drink it themselves to get drunk.

Every weekend, somewhere in America, high schoolers are having a "pharm party." They raid their parents' medicine cabinet for prescriptions, take them to a party, and dump them in a bowl. Anyone who wants to partake will reach in and take anything they happen to pull out. It is wise to keep medication in a lock box and discard any unused medication.

Other dangerous games include:

- The "**cinnamon challenge**" in which they fill their mouth with cinnamon and try to swallow. The cinnamon immediately dries out the mouth and makes it impossible to swallow leading to intense coughing and choking. If the cinnamon gets inhaled in the lungs it can lead to pneumonia-like symptoms.
- The "**chubby bunny**" marshmallow game during which the mouth is stuffed with as many marshmallows as possible and then trying to say "chubby bunny." Unfortunately, there is risk of choking.

Tweens and teens are less likely to be involved in risky behavior when their parents have discussed their disapproval of drug and alcohol use; the importance of thinking before acting; and making wise decisions. These topics need to be an on-going dialogue from early years through the teen years. When the teaching begins at home, that gives a student one more tool to resist the negative influences they will meet at school.

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