

Let's Turn the Tide

By Reg P. Wydeven
January 21, 2018

Young people do stupid things. When I was in high school, I made \$10 by eating a Sausage dog treat, but I couldn't eat or drink anything else for 10 minutes after. At our five-year class reunion, my buddy, Pearl, consumed a concoction of Oreos, pickles, cheese and crackers and beer for \$34.

Thankfully, most of the stupid things we did in our youth only live on in our memories, which only become more legendary with time. Today, however, acts of idiocy are captured on cell phone cameras to be preserved for eternity. There are even internet "challenges," that dare people to do really, really moronic things.

Some of these stupid stunts included the Sprite and banana challenge, where kids ate a banana and immediately drank a two-liter bottle of Sprite. And then immediately threw up. Another was the cinnamon challenge, which involved eating a spoonful of the spice followed by intense fits of coughing and freaking out.

While these deeds were dumb and not very safe, they weren't nearly as dangerous as the newest fad – the Tide Pod Challenge.

This task involves kids putting laundry detergent pods in their mouths. While the stuff Pearl and I shoved down our gullets tasted terrible, at least it wasn't poisonous. Laundry detergent pods, however, contain a highly toxic mix of ethanol, hydrogen peroxide and polymers. While these ingredients are great at combating dirt and grime, they also do a number on your innards.

The trend has gained the attention of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Earlier this month, Ann Marie Buerkle, acting chairman of the CPSC, issued a warning about the dangers of ingesting laundry detergent pods, which can be deadly. "This is what started out as a joke on the internet and now it's just gone too far," she said.

Ever since the pods came on the market, manufacturers and the government have been concerned about toddlers possibly eating them. Because they're bright and colorful, the pods could possibly be confused with candy.

Between 2013 and 2014, more than 62,000 children under the age of six were exposed to laundry and dishwasher detergents. At least 10 people have died after eating a laundry detergent pod. Two were toddlers, while eight were seniors suffering from dementia.

The danger is so high, researchers warn consumers with children to not use laundry detergent pods and opt for traditional detergent instead. Watchdog group Consumer Reports no longer recommends using detergent pods at all. Before they can advise consumers to use them, the organization is calling for the "adoption of tougher safety measures."

The CPSC agrees, and is working with manufacturers to reduce the likelihood of the pods being confused with candy. Buerkle intends to make the pods safer by, "Making that laundry packet opaque, less attractive, less colorful, reducing the toxicity and the strength of laundry detergent."

In 2015, the American Cleaning Institute helped establish voluntary safety standards for pods. These include requiring safety latches on packages and adding a bitter film to the outside of packets.

I just hope we can **Arm** our legislators with enough data that they can **Gain** the information they need to **Hammer** out some regulations on laundry detergent pods and turn the **Tide** of this fad and keep us **All** safe. Making that many laundry detergent puns is not Febreezy.

This article originally appeared in the Appleton Post-Crescent newspaper and is reprinted with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. © 2018 McCarty Law LLP. All rights reserved.