How Dangerous are Glow Sticks?

Parents recognize the fact that fireworks and small children just don’t mix. Products such as glow sticks and glow jewelry are a safer alternative to bottle rockets and sparklers which can cause serious burns. These brightly colored glow products are soft and pliable and are attractive to small children. When put in the mouth they can be easily broken open.

The chemical inside the plastic tube is called dibutyl phthalate (DBP). This liquid can be clear to a yellow, oily liquid and has a very bitter taste. The liquid generally causes immediate stinging and burning sensation to the mouth and eyes.

Last year the Nebraska Regional Poison Center (NRPC) managed 321 calls concerning these products. Parents who see their child with a glowing mouth often panic and take their child to an emergency room. The liquid if ingested should only cause brief discomfort to the mouth and can be treated by rinsing thoroughly. Washing skin immediately to prevent the child from rubbing liquid into the eye is recommended. If the liquid gets into the eye it will cause immediate redness and burning. Prompt irrigation is needed. The nurses at the NRPC can help you by providing care advice and follow up calls.

Pets may see more serious symptoms after an exposure to DBP. Cats are fastidious groomers and ingest the product if it is spilled on their coat. One bite from a glow stick can cause drooling, gagging and vomiting in pets.

Contact the NRPC at 1-800-222-1222 before rushing your child into an emergency room. By calling the nurses at the Poison Center you will receive immediate care advice and save yourself time and money.