



# Detergent Pods

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

### What are detergent pods?

Detergent pods, pacs, gel-pacs, and tablets are single-use portions of detergent that can be used for dishes or laundry. Detergent pods are used in place of traditional liquid detergent. Detergent pods can be liquid-filled packets or tablets made from pressed detergent powder.

Detergent pods have been available in the United States since 2010 and are becoming more common today.



*Detergent pods can be liquid-filled pouches, like the ones in this photo, or pressed powder tablets. (Image source: iStock)*

### Why are detergent pods dangerous?

Even though using detergent pods according to the directions on the box is completely safe, reports of poisonings through eating detergent pods have been increasing. Young children and people with certain impulse control disorders may be tempted to eat detergent pods due to their colorful, candy-like appearance. Also, recent social media trends have been encouraging older children and even teenagers to eat detergent pods.

Some studies have shown that detergent pods may be more toxic than traditional liquid detergent. This means that eating detergent pods on accident or on purpose can cause severe health effects.

### What health problems can come from eating detergent pods?

All detergent can irritate the skin on your lips and in your mouth and throat if swallowed. Common symptoms of eating detergent include coughing, upset stomach, nausea, and vomiting. The more detergent you eat, the worse your symptoms.

Different brands of laundry and dish detergent pods may contain many different toxic chemicals that can cause many health problems. The table below shows some chemicals in different brands of detergent pods and the health problems that eating them can cause.

Chemical Name	Possible Health Effects
Hydrogen peroxide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea</li><li>• Severe stomach swelling</li></ul>
Polyethylene glycols (PEG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea</li><li>• A feeling of being full</li><li>• Problems with taste</li></ul>
Sodium bicarbonate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea</li><li>• Severe stomach swelling</li><li>• Large amounts can cause seizures, coma, and heart failure</li></ul>
Sodium bisulfite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea</li><li>• Stomach pain and bleeding</li><li>• Large doses can cause seizures and heart failure</li></ul>
Sodium percarbonate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Stomach swelling and pain</li><li>• Large amounts can cause your stomach to tear or burn your mouth, throat, and stomach</li></ul>
Subtilisins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• May trigger asthma attack for people with asthma</li></ul>
Zinc sulfate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea and vomiting</li><li>• Stomach pain</li></ul>

## **How can I protect myself and my family from poisoning by detergent pods?**

Never eat detergent or any household cleaners. Keep all household cleaning products out of reach of children and pets.

Always follow all directions and safety instructions that are on the detergent packaging. Keep your detergent pods in their original packaging so you have the safety instructions with them.

## **What should I do if I or someone in my family has swallowed detergent?**

To report a poisoning, **immediately call the 24-hour Poison Emergency Hotline at (800) 222-1222**, or go online to [www.PoisonHelp.org](http://www.PoisonHelp.org). Follow all the instructions that you are given.

Make sure the person who may have been poisoned is not still eating the detergent. Have the person rinse their mouth with water and spit it out. If the person wears dentures, have them remove their dentures before rinsing their mouth.

Do not try to make the person who has swallowed the detergent vomit unless told to do so by a doctor or someone from the Poison Emergency Hotline. Making someone who has swallowed detergent vomit can be dangerous for their health.

You may be able to contact the company that makes the detergent for more information if their phone number is provided on the packaging.

**Always contact the Poison Emergency Hotline before calling anyone else.**

If you believe your pet may have eaten something poisonous, call the 24-hour ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) at (888) 426-4435.

## **Resources**

Toxicology Data Network (TOXNET) – U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Household Products Database, 2017, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Health Hazards Associated with Laundry Detergent Pods – United States, May-June 2012, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Vol. 61, No. 41. 2012, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Animal Poison Control, Pet Care, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

## **Where can I get more information?**

Ohio Department of Health  
Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection  
Health Assessment Section  
246 N. High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: (614) 644-2727



*Following all instructions on detergent packaging will keep you and your family safe. (Image source: Dreamstime)*