

Pot products spur new legislation in Colorado

By Barry Petersen
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Edible pot products, like brownies and cookies, make up about 45 percent of the legal marijuana industry in Colorado. And companies that make and sell these products now have to comply with new packaging, labeling, and potency restrictions.

It looks like candy, but this is candy infused with pot. At Dixie Elixirs, they take marijuana oil, and mix it into foods like chocolate. The process is still the same, but under a new state law, the packaging is not.

"So our mints used to come in a slider tin," said Lindsay Topping, who is marketing director for Dixie Elixirs. "We've actually taken them to an F1 certified blister pack, so that means each one of these mints is individually child-resistant."

The law came from bad experiences after marijuana for recreational use was legalized in 2014. Edible sales soared. So did emergency room visits by kids who ate edibles.

"It really affects the developing brain, and can cause psychotic symptoms to occur," said Dr. Larry Wolk, who runs the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and calls pot and kids a bad mix. "It can mess with your memory, so there's a lot of even irreversible damage that marijuana can do to the developing brain."

And now, each edible sold for recreational use can have no more than a 10mg dose of THC, the active ingredient in pot. Before, products like cookies could have several doses and were meant to be broken up.

Last year, visiting Wyoming college student Levi Thamba ate a multiple-dose marijuana cookie all at once. He overdosed, and jumped to his death from a hotel balcony.

But new packaging can't replace the best precaution: parental vigilance. "There is a level of responsibility that a consumer takes on when they purchase this product," said Topping. "They have to store it safely, and people buying this product have to start talking to their kids about the fact that it exists in the world. It's no different than talking to your kids about alcohol."

There will likely be other problems as pot use spreads and likely more new laws to come.

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