Torch Fuel Poisoning

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Oklahoma City – Using torches for your yard and patio is decorative and may help keep the mosquitoes away, but even a few drops of torch fuel introduced into the airway can produce severe chemical pneumonia. Safe handling and storage can prevent serious injuries from happening. Torch fuel, sometimes called torch oil, comes in variety of containers and sizes. Once poured, the fuel looks similar to apple and other fruit juices. Store these products away from drinks, coolers, and snacks that children can access at campsite or picnic area.

According to Scott Schaeffer, managing director of the Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information (OCPDI), “Hydrocarbons, including torch fuel and charcoal lighter fluid, can coat the lungs and create serious respiratory problems. These exposures are most common among young children who can easily mistake these products for drinks. Injury including chemical pneumonitis, respiratory distress, and death is possible following aspiration.” Petroleum-based products including gasoline and other hydrocarbons can produce similar health effects.

The symptoms of hydrocarbon poisoning may include difficulty breathing, persistent cough, low grade fever, chest pain, and lethargy. If an exposure occurs act quickly.

**Don't make a fatal mistake:**

* Do NOT put poisons into food containers.
* Put the child-resistant cap firmly back in place after using torch fuel or similar products.
* Always keep these products in their original container up and away from children.
* Store these products away from food and drinks.
* Don’t leave children unattended with torch fuel or similar products.
* Save the Poison Helpline number, 1-800-222-1222, in your phone.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the poison center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email.

The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, log on to www.oklahomapoison.org.