

Laundry industry responds to ACCC's alert on the safe storage and handling of liquid capsules

Australian laundry detergent manufacturers and their industry body, Accord, are concerned about reports of child exposures to the contents of liquid laundry detergent capsules. We have been in active discussion with the product safety regulator, the ACCC, to determine the extent of these exposures and discuss possible measures to reduce this risk.

Liquid laundry capsules are a relatively recent introduction onto the Australian market and provide convenience, as well as the environmental benefit of not over-dosing your daily wash. They also offer the benefits of easy dosing of the laundry wash for some who may have difficulties, including the elderly and disabled.

Whilst they are safe when used as instructed, liquid laundry capsules should be handled in accordance with label directions and, as with any other household cleaning products, kept well away from children.

Recent experience both here and overseas has shown that liquid laundry capsules, when stored inappropriately, can be attractive to young children.

Our industry places the highest value on product safety and will continue to work collaboratively with the ACCC.

Liquid laundry capsule manufacturers are responding proactively and, as the relevant industry association, Accord will commence developing written guidelines for reducing the risk of child exposure to laundry capsules.

These industry guidelines will be open to Accord members as well as non-member companies to follow. They will reflect industry initiatives also being undertaken in Europe and North America, which have included enhanced label warnings, packaging changes and safety campaigns targeting parents.

Parents and carers are reminded to keep household cleaning products well away from children and to follow the ACCC's specific advice on liquid laundry capsule products:

- **Keep liquid laundry detergent capsules out of sight and reach of children, preferably in cupboards or storage compartments that they can't reach, or are lockable.**
- **Contact the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 if you believe your child has symptoms of having been exposed to household chemicals such as liquid laundry capsules.**
- **Get immediate medical advice if your child becomes sick and may have ingested liquid laundry capsules, or shows signs of serious skin irritation that may have occurred as a result of a capsule breaking on your child.**

It is also important to keep stored liquid laundry detergent capsules away from water. The capsule's outer wrapping is designed to dissolve when added to your wash. For this reason liquid laundry capsules should not be handled with wet hands.

The safety of children is of paramount importance and Accord has published general guidance for families on children and the safe storage of household products:

http://www.accord.asn.au/public_information_submission/children_and_safe_storage.

Information about the contents of consumer cleaning products can also be readily accessed via Accord's *What's in it?* ingredient disclosure initiative, which is supported by all leading detergent manufacturers in Australia: http://www.accord.asn.au/whats_in_it.

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Supplementary Q&A to the media statement

What is the issue?

Australian detergent manufacturers and their industry body, Accord, are concerned about reports of child exposures to the contents of liquid laundry detergent capsules. We have been in active discussions with the product safety regulator, the ACCC, to determine the extent of these exposures and discuss possible measures to reduce this risk.

Whilst they are safe when used as instructed, liquid laundry detergent capsules should be handled in accordance with label directions and, as with any other household cleaning products, kept well away from children.

Accord was initially alerted to this issue by ACCC in November 2012 and we, along with our member companies, have been in active dialogue with the ACCC since then, considering the best and most relevant options to meaningfully address the issue.

Why use liquid laundry capsules over laundry liquids or powders?

Liquid laundry detergent capsules are a relatively recent introduction onto the Australian market and provide convenience, as well as the environmental benefit of not over-dosing your daily wash. They also offer the benefits of easy dosing of the laundry for some who may have difficulties, such as the elderly and disabled. They are practical, sustainable and safe when used as instructed.

What will the industry guidelines specify?

The industry guidelines will reflect company proactive initiatives as well as industry-wide initiatives being undertaken in Europe and North America, which have included enhanced label warnings, outer packaging changes and safety campaigns targeting parents. The guidelines will be finalised in consultation with the ACCC.

When will they be available?

Depending on the progress of discussions with the ACCC, Accord is hoping the guidelines will be finalised soon and available in March 2013.