

Warning regarding jelly sweets containing cannabis (THC)

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) is urging parents and guardians to be extremely vigilant to the dangers of their children getting access to and eating confectionary, particularly jelly sweets, containing significant amounts of the psychoactive cannabis component called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). This warning comes amid the ongoing seizures of these illegal food products by the Gardaí and Customs services, and a number of serious medical incidents whereby these THC-containing jelly sweets resulted in teenagers and young children suffering serious adverse health effects requiring hospitalisation. These jelly sweets are packaged to look like popular brands of jellies and have been found to contain toxic amounts of THC (up to 50mg/jelly). Depending on the concentration of THC, eating one of these jellies can mean an equivalent intake of THC that is 5-10 times higher than that inhaled from a single cannabis cigarette. Also, unlike the almost immediate effects of inhaling THC (smoking or vaping), ingesting THC through these jellies can take up to 30 minutes for any effects to be felt. However, while waiting for those effects, those who have eaten these products may overdose in the mistaken belief that they need to eat more sweets in order to feel the effects. Of particular concern to the FSAI is the inadvertent consumption of these jelly sweets by small children who may somehow gain access to what looks and possibly tastes like ordinary sweets. Unfortunately, given access to a bag of these jellies, children will rarely eat just one and therefore, overdosing is a very likely outcome as witnessed by the hospitalisation of a number of seriously ill young children in the early part of 2021.

The FSAI has become aware of reports about the availability of THC-containing jelly sweets in schools in Ireland and therefore, parents and guardians are asked to speak with their teenagers alerting them to the dangers if they eat them or if their younger siblings get access to them and subsequently suffer the serious consequences of consuming a toxic substance.