

Preventing Poisoning
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Now that spring is upon us, many are starting to think about their annual spring cleaning activities. One area we all need to think about is whether or not our home is safe from the risk of unintentional poisonings for those who may enter it. Barbara Cole with the Indiana Poison Center states, "It is important for people to know that most poisonings are unintentional, which means although they weren't meant to have occurred they could have been prevented." According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, Inc. (AAPCC) every 30 seconds a child is poisoned in the United States. 60% of all poisonings occur to children under the age of 6. Young children are curious and put almost anything in their mouth, even if it doesn't smell or taste good.

When are unintentional poisonings most likely to occur?

- 1. Before lunch and dinner because children are hungry or thirsty.**
- 2. When a product is being used, not while it is being stored.**
- 3. When there are changes in the daily routine such as when a babysitter is present, illness, holidays, moving, vacations, stressful times and celebrations.**
- 4. When products are improperly stored.**
- 5. When adults do not follow package directions for products such as herbicides, fertilizers, insecticides and medications.**
- 6. When visiting a grandparent or friend.**
- 7. When teens become angry or depressed.**
- 8. When someone becomes confused and disoriented.**

What are the most dangerous poisons?

Medicines, including iron pills, cleaning products that can cause burns: drain opener, toilet bowl cleaner, oven cleaner, or rust remover, antifreeze and windshield washer solution, hydrocarbons: furniture polish, lighter fluid, lamp oil, kerosene, turpentine and paint thinner, carbon monoxide, pesticides and wild mushrooms.

What can I do to prevent an unintentional poisoning?

- 1. Share this poison information with family, babysitters and anyone else your child spends time with.**
- 2. Look at poisons as any substance that can cause an unintended symptom. For example: taking a medicine that doesn't belong to you or mixing together 2 cleansers.**
- 3. Keep all household poisons and medicines in their original, labeled, child-resistant containers. Remember medicine caps are child resistant, not childproof, and if a child is given enough time they will open the container. Do not store household and chemical products in food containers such as milk jugs or soda bottles.**
- 4. Store food and household and chemical products in separate areas. Many poisonous products look alike and come in containers very similar to drinks and food, such as apple juice and pine cleaner.**
- 5. Lock poisons and medicines out of the reach and sight of small children.**
- 6. Discard old or outdated household and chemical products.**

7. Be as careful with non-prescription medicines, vitamins and minerals as you are with prescription medicines. Do not refer to medicine as candy or take your medicine in front of children. Young children often imitate grown-ups.
8. Keep your purse and diaper bags and visitors purses, diaper bags and suitcases out of children's reach.
9. Never leave children alone with household products or medicines. If you are using a product, take the child with you when you stop to answer the door or phone.
10. Return household and chemical products to safe storage immediately after use.
11. Know which plants in and around your home can be poisonous, and keep them away from children and pets. Label all the plants, trees and shrubs in and around your home. You may contact the IPC for a list of poisonous and non-poisonous plants. If you cannot identify a plant, take a sample to a nursery for identification.
12. Teach your children about poisonous substances. Teach them not to eat mushrooms growing in the yard. Teach them not to eat leaves and berries that grow in the yard. Do not assume a plant is safe to eat if you see wild animals eating it. Teach them to ask an adult before eating or drinking anything they're not sure about.
13. Weed and bug killer or fertilizer can be absorbed through the skin and can be very toxic. Keep children away from areas that have recently been sprayed.

What should I do if I have a poisoning emergency?

If the person who is poisoned can't wake up, is having trouble breathing or is having seizures - Call 9-1-1.

Keep the number of your poison center on or near your telephone. If the person who is poisoned is alert, is not having trouble breathing and is not having seizures - Call 1-800-222-1222, which is the Indiana Poison Center (IPC). The IPC has trained nurses and pharmacists who specialize in poisoning emergency treatment and poison prevention. The poison specialist will help you decide if you need to go to the hospital. Most poisonings are not life threatening and can be handled at home with the help of a specialist. Calling the IPC will not delay treatment. If the specialist decides that you need to go to the emergency room, they will call ahead so that help is waiting for you as soon as you arrive. The IPC will want to know you to have the following information:

1. The condition, age and weight of the victim.
2. Product containers or bottles and how much of the product was taken.
3. Time the poisoning occurred.
4. Your name and phone number.

Barbara Cole, with IPC, states it is no longer recommend to purchase ipecac syrup. If you have a bottle of ipecac syrup you need to keep it out of reach of children and discard of the ipecac syrup if it is expired. Never use ipecac syrup unless instructed by the IPC or your health care professional.

Information for this article was obtained from the AAPCC and the IPC. Their websites are found at www.aapcc.org and www.clarian.org.