

## Poison safety for Infants

Children can get very sick if they come in contact with medications, household pesticides, chemicals, cosmetics, or plants. This can happen at any age and can cause serious reactions. However, most children who come in contact with poison are not permanently harmed if they are treated right away.

If your child does eat something that could be poisonous, call your doctor or the Poison Center immediately. The local poison control number is 1-800-222-1222.

### Prevention

Young children are poisoned most commonly by things in the home such as:

- drugs and medications (iron medications are one of the most common causes of poisonings in children under age 5)
- cleaning products
- plants
- cosmetics
- pesticides
- paints and solvents

Most poisonings occur when parents are not paying close attention. If you are ill or stressed, you may not watch your child as closely as usual. The hectic routine of getting dinner on the table causes so many lapses in parental attention that late afternoon is known as “the arsenic hour” by poison center personnel.

In addition, children like to put things into their mouths and taste things. This is a natural way for children to learn about the world around them. Children also copy adults without knowing what they are doing.

The best way to prevent poisonings is to lock up all toxic substances where your child cannot get to them. Also, watch your child even more closely whenever you are somewhere that is not childproofed. Be especially attentive when your child is visiting another home, or a grandparent’s home, where childproofing may not have been done.

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, and gardening chemicals locked away or disposed of safely.
- Be sure to keep household products such as cleaners, chemicals, and medicines up, up, and away, completely out of sight and reach
- Never store lye drain cleaners in your home
- Use safety latches on drawers and cupboards

## Treatment

### Swallowed poison

If you find your child with an open or empty container of a toxic substance, your child may have been poisoned. Stay calm and act quickly.

First, get the poison away from your child. If there is still some in your child's mouth, make him spit it out, or remove it with your fingers. Keep this material along with any other evidence that might help determine what was swallowed.

Next, check for these signs:

- severe throat pain
- breathing difficulty
- sudden behavior changes, such as unusual sleepiness, irritability, or jumpiness
- unexplained nausea or vomiting
- stomach cramps without fever
- burns on your child's lips or mouth
- unusual drooling, or odd odors on your child's breath
- unexplained stains on your child's clothing
- convulsions or unconsciousness (only in very serious cases)

If your child has any of these signs, call 911 right away. Take the poison container with you to the doctor to help determine what was swallowed. *Do not make your child vomit* as this may cause further damage. Also, *do not follow instructions about poisoning on the label* of the container, as these are often out of date.

If your child does not have these symptoms, call your regional poison center or doctor (1-800-222-1222). They will need the following information in order to help you:

- Your name and phone number.
- Your child's name, age, and weight.
- Any medical conditions your child may have.
- Any medications your child may be taking.
- The name of the substance your child swallowed. Read it off the container and spell it.
- The ingredients of the substance your child swallowed if they are listed on the label. If your child has swallowed a prescription medicine, give all the information on the label including the name of the drug. If the name of the drug is not on the label, give the name and phone number of the pharmacy, and the date of the prescription.
- What the pill looked like (if you can tell) and if it had any printed numbers on it. If your child swallowed another substance, such as a part of a plant, describe it as much as you can to help identify it.
- The time your child swallowed the poison (or when you found your child), and the amount you think was swallowed.

If the poison is extremely dangerous, or if your child is very young, you may be told to make him vomit and take him directly to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, you will be given instructions to follow at home.

**Poison fumes**

In the home, poisonous fumes can come from:

- a car running in a closed garage
- leaky gas vents
- wood, coal, or kerosene stoves that are not working properly

If your child is exposed to fumes or gases get her into fresh air right away. If she is breathing, call the poison center for further instructions, If she has stopped breathing, start CPR and do not stop until she breathes on her own or someone else can take over, If you can, have someone call 911 right away. If you are alone, wait until your child is breathing or, after 1 minute of CPR, call 911.

**Poison on the skin**

If your child spills a dangerous chemical on her body, remove her clothes and rinse the skin with lukewarm—not hot—water. If the area shows signs of being burned, continue rinsing for at least 15 minutes, no matter how much your child may protest. Then call the poison center for further advice. Do not use ointments or grease.

**Poison in the eye**

Flush your child's eye by holding the eyelid open and pouring a steady stream of lukewarm water into the inner corner. A young child is sure to object to this, so get another adult to hold your child while you rinse the eye. If that is not possible, wrap your child tightly in a towel and clamp him under one arm. This way you will have one hand free to hold the eyelid open and the other to pour in the water. Continue flushing the eye for 15 minutes. Then call the poison center for further instructions. Do not use an eyecup, eyedrops, or ointment unless the poison center tells you to do so.

**Be prepared**

Be prepared for a poisoning emergency by posting the poison center phone number by every phone in your home. Stickers and magnets are available in our office. The local poison control number is 1-800-222-1222.