

Accidental Poisoning

Toddlers are at the highest risk for accidental poisoning because of the innate curiosity and ability to open “childproof” containers. Mouthing activity continues to be prevalent after 1 year old, and exploring objects by tasting them is part of children's curious investigation. Toddlers' curiosity and inability to understand logical consequences further place them at risk for ingesting harmful substances. Many household products, medications, and plants can be poisonous if swallowed, if they come in contact with the skin or eyes, or if they are inhaled. Although in many instances poisoning does not result in death, it may cause significant morbidity, such as esophageal stricture from lye ingestion. Toddlers are able to climb most heights, open most drawers or closets, and unscrew most lids. By trial and error, younger children also manage to undo tops of bottles, plastic containers, aerosol cans, and jars, including those with child-resistant lids. Newer forms of drugs, such as transdermal patches and cough-suppressant lozenges, have created additional dangers because they are not packaged with safety caps and the lozenges look like candy.

The major reason for poisoning is improper storage ([Fig. 11-13](#)). The guidelines suggested in [Chapter 13](#) apply to children in this age group as well. However, unlike infants, who are confined to certain heights and unable to unlatch child-proof locks, young children manage to find access to many high-level, tight-security places. For this age group, only a locked cabinet is safe.