

## Keep Poison Away from Children



You may think child poisoning couldn't happen to your family. But, poisoning is the third leading cause of accidental death in children ages 1 to 19. Many household products and substances can be poisonous. Three main things you can do to keep your children safe are:



- Lock up all toxic materials out of children's reach.
- Teach your children to stay away from poisons.
- Be ready for emergencies. Program the poison control number (800-222-1222) into your cell phone. And, post it near phones in your home.

## Help others keep kids safe

Share this info with grandparents and other caregivers. Help them "poison-proof" their homes. Many caregivers are not up-to-date about poison dangers and how to prevent them.

## How poisonings happen

Poisonings can happen for many reasons:

- Young children like to explore. They often put things in their mouths.
- Kids often get into things their parents didn't think they could. For instance, they may be able to reach items on high counters or in open cabinets.
- Children often copy adults. So they might try to use a product, such as medicine, without knowing the dangers.

- Kids are drawn to bright colors and good smells. This can be unsafe. For instance, a child might not know that a lemon-scented floor cleaner is not something to drink.
- Kids are at higher risk of poisoning. Their smaller bodies are more easily affected.

## Prevent poisonings

These tips can help prevent a poisoning in your home:

- Store toxic substances out of reach of children. Keep them in a locked cabinet.
- Store products in their original containers. Don't put products from one container into another, especially to food or beverage containers. This can confuse children. It can also cause problems knowing what the product is in case of a poisoning.
- Buy products in child-resistant packaging. But keep in mind that no container is childproof, even with a safety cap.
- Buy products wisely. Choose the least toxic product for your purpose. For instance, don't buy concentrates. They are far more hazardous than ready-to-use chemicals.
- Never mix cleaning products, especially those with ammonia and bleach. This can make toxic fumes.
- Read labels to find out what products are poisonous. Follow all safety measures on product labels.
- Don't keep risky items in your bag, such as medicines and vitamins. Kids can often get into your bag.

## Household products to watch out for

Below are household products that can be a poisoning risk to children.

## Medicines and vitamins

Nearly half of all child poisonings involve medicines:

- Keep them in a locked cabinet out of reach of children.
- Keep all medicines out of reach, even those with a safety cap.
- Always close the container and the childproof cap securely after taking medicine.
- Don't leave medicines where your child can reach them. Risky spots include on the counter, in your bag, and on the nightstand.
- Don't take medicines in front of children.
- Pay attention when giving a child medicine. Read the label and make sure you're giving the right product and dose.
- Never let young children take medicine themselves.
- Before giving medicine to a child, make sure someone else has not already given it to them.
- Use a pill organizer if your child takes a number of medicines. Also use a written daily schedule to make sure medicines are given only as directed.
- Get rid of outdated medicines safely. Don't toss them in the trash, flush them, or pour them down the drain. Instead, put liquid medicine or crushed pills into a sealable plastic bag. Add kitty litter, coffee grounds, or other material to keep kids or pets from eating it. Then place in the trash. For more tips, ask your pharmacist or local waste disposal company.

- Don't tell kids that medicines are candy. That may encourage children to eat them. This is also true for vitamins. Be very careful with prenatal vitamins. These have high levels of iron. Iron can be deadly to kids if they take too much of it.

## Household substances

- Store cleaners, pest control poisons, paint, and other dangerous substances safely. Put them in a locked cabinet out of reach of children.
- Take care to store dangerous substances safely in the garage and inside the house.

## Alcohol

- Alcohol poisoning can happen from anything that contains alcohol. This includes alcoholic drinks, mouthwash, and perfumes. It also includes extracts such as almond extract.
- Keep all items with alcohol out of reach of children.

## Household plants

- Don't keep poisonous houseplants, such as irises and daffodils. Check the [National Capital Poison Center website at www.poison.org/articles/plant](http://www.poison.org/articles/plant) for more information.
- If you do have poisonous plants in the home, keep them out of reach of children. And keep in mind that all plants are choking hazards for kids younger than age 3.
- Tell kids that plants are not food and should never be eaten.

## Carbon monoxide

- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Carbon monoxide is a gas that you can't see, smell, or taste. It's a major cause of poisoning in the U.S., and it can be deadly. Check the detector on a regular basis. Change the batteries every year.
- Make sure fuel-burning appliances are in good repair. Carbon monoxide can be emitted from broken appliances such as gas heaters, space heaters, or ovens. Also check that fireplaces and furnaces are vented correctly. Inspect them each year.
- Be aware that carbon monoxide poisoning can cause flu-like symptoms. These include nausea, dizziness, and headache. If several members of the family have these symptoms at the same time, get out of the home. Get fresh air right away. Then call 911 or emergency services.

## Lead

- Find out if your house has lead paint. It was often used in older houses.
- If your house does have lead paint, hire professionals to remove it. Have them replace lead paint with lead-free paint.
- Remove any loose pieces of paint so your child doesn't eat them.
- If you're concerned, talk to your healthcare provider about testing your child for lead poisoning.

## Button batteries

- Keep button batteries out of reach.

- Make sure kids can't open the battery compartment on any battery-powered product, such as remote controls.
- If your child has swallowed a button battery, or one is stuck in their nose, ear, or throat, call **911**. Serious damage that may lead to death can occur in less than 2 hours.

## Prepare for a poisoning emergency

Be ready for a poisoning to save precious time. Here are tips to help you:

- Have emergency contact information available at all times:
  - Program the national poison center phone number (800-222-1222) into your cell phone. Post the number by phones in your home. Also post your home address. This can be easy to forget in an emergency. Poison Control is free, confidential, and available 24/7.
  - Program emergency numbers into your cell phone and landlines speed dial.
  - Post emergency information on the refrigerator. Emergency responders are trained to look there. Include details on long-term medicines and medicine allergies for each family member. Also include your family's emergency contact phone numbers.
- Teach your child about poisons and how to respond in an emergency (see box below).
- In case of a poisoning, know the name of the product or substance involved in the poisoning when you call poison control. If possible, have the container of the poison with you.

## Teach children about poisoning

Teaching your child about poisons and their dangers can help prevent a disaster. Tell your kids the following:

- Some products and substances can hurt them. Tell kids to never touch them.
- All spills of chemicals or other dangerous substances should be handled by adults.
- To memorize their address as soon as they can learn it.
- How to call 911 or emergency services and poison control. Unplug the phone and have kids practice dialing.

For more information, visit the [National Capital Poison Center website at www.poison.org](http://www.poison.org).

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