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Blue nightshade poisoning

Blue nightshade poisoning occurs when someone eats parts of the blue nightshade plant.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual poison exposure. If you or someone you are with has an exposure, call your local emergency number (such as 911), or your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

The poisonous ingredients are:

- Atropine
- Solanine (which is very poisonous, even in small amounts)

Where Found

The poison is found in the blue nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) plant, especially in the fruit and leaves.

Symptoms

Blue nightshade poisoning can affect many parts of the body:

EYES, EARS, NOSE, AND THROAT

- Dry mouth
- Enlarged (dilated) pupils

STOMACH AND INTESTINES

- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain

HEART AND BLOOD

- Pulse -- slow

- Shock

LUNGS

- Slow breathing

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Delirium (agitation and confusion)
- Hallucinations
- Headache
- Loss of sensation
- Paralysis

WHOLE BODY

- Sweating or dry skin
- Elevated body temperature (hyperthermia)

Home Care

Seek immediate medical help. DO NOT make a person throw up unless told to do so by poison control or a health care provider.

Before Calling Emergency

Get the following information:

- Person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of the plant, if known
- Time it was swallowed
- Amount swallowed

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does not need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

The provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure. Symptoms will be treated as appropriate. The person may receive:

- Activated charcoal

- Blood and urine tests
- Breathing support, including oxygen through a tube through the mouth into the lungs, and a breathing machine (ventilator)
- Chest x-ray
- ECG (electrocardiogram, or heart tracing)
- Fluids through a vein (IV)
- Medicines to treat symptoms and reverse the effects of the poison (antidote)

Outlook (Prognosis)

How well you do depends on the amount of poison swallowed and how quickly treatment is received. The faster you get medical help, the better the chance for recovery.

Symptoms last for 1 to 3 days and may require a hospital stay. Death is unlikely.

DO NOT touch or eat any unfamiliar plant. Wash your hands after working in the garden or walking in the woods.

Alternative Names

Bittersweet poisoning; Bitter nightshade poisoning; Scarlet berry poisoning; Weedy nightshade poisoning

References

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Review Date 11/2/2023

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