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Baking powder overdose

Baking powder is a cooking product that helps batter rise. This article discusses the effects of swallowing a large amount of baking powder. Baking powder is considered nontoxic when it is used in cooking and baking. However, serious complications can occur from overdoses or allergic reactions.

This is for information only and not for use in the treatment or management of an actual overdose. If you have an overdose, you should call your local emergency number (such as 911) or the 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

Baking powder contains sodium bicarbonate (also found in baking soda) and an acid (such as cream of tartar). It may also contain cornstarch or a similar product to keep it from clumping.

Where Found

The above ingredients are used in baking powder. They may also be found in other products.

Symptoms

The symptoms of a baking powder overdose include:

- Thirst
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting (severe)
- Diarrhea (severe)

Home Care

Seek medical help right away. DO NOT make a person throw up unless poison control or a health care provider tells you to do so.

If the person can swallow, give them water or milk right away, unless a provider tells you not to. DO NOT give water or milk if the person has symptoms that make it hard to swallow. These include vomiting, having convulsions, or a decreased level of alertness.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- The person's age, weight, and condition
- The name of the product
- The time it was swallowed
- The 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. 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

Take the container with you to the hospital, if possible.

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

- Blood and urine tests
- ECG (electrocardiogram or heart tracing)
- Intravenous fluids (through a vein)
- Medicines to treat symptoms

Outlook (Prognosis)

The outcome of a baking powder overdose depends on many factors, including:

- Amount of baking powder swallowed
- Person's age, weight, and overall health
- Type of complications that develop

If nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are not controlled, serious dehydration and body chemical and mineral (electrolyte) imbalances may occur. These can cause heart rhythm disturbances.

Keep all household food items in their original containers and out of the reach of children. Any white powder may look like sugar to a child. This mix up could lead to accidental ingestion.

Alternative Names

Sodium bicarbonate

References

Thomas SHL. Poisoning. In: Penman ID, Ralston SH, Strachan MWJ, Hobson RP, eds. *Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine*. 24th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 10.

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