

# Protect Your Child From Poison



Children can get very sick if they come in contact with medicines, household products, pesticides, chemicals, cosmetics, or plants. This can happen at any age and can cause serious reactions. However, most children who come in contact with these things are not poisoned. And most who are poisoned are not permanently hurt if they are treated right away.

Read more to learn how to prevent poisonings and what to do if your child has been poisoned.

## Prevention

Most poisonings occur when parents are not paying close attention. While you are busy cooking dinner, or planning tomorrow's schedule, your child may explore what's in the closet or under the bathroom sink.

Because children like to put things into their mouths and taste them, all dangerous items should be kept out of their reach. The best way to prevent poisonings is to lock up all dangerous items.

The most dangerous potential poisons in the home for young children are

- Medicines (iron medicines are one of the most serious causes of poisonings in children younger than 5 years)
- Cleaning products
- Antifreeze
- Windshield washer fluid
- Pesticides
- Furniture polish
- Gasoline, kerosene, lamp oil

## Poison Help Line

Call **1-800-222-1222** if you have a poison emergency. A poison expert in your area is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Also call if you have a question about a poison or about poison prevention.

**1-800-222-1222** is a nationwide toll-free number that directs your call to your regional poison center.



It also is important to store medicines and household products in their original containers. Many dangerous items look like food or drinks. For example, your child may mistake powdered dish soap for sugar or lemon liquid cleaner for lemonade.

Also, watch your child even more closely when you are away from home — especially at a grandparent's home where medicines are often left within a child's reach.

Read "How to poison-proof your home" for more safety tips. →

## How to poison-proof your home

### In the kitchen

- Store medicines, cleaners, lye, furniture polish, dishwasher soap, and other dangerous products in a locked cabinet.
- Lock medicines and poisons high, out of sight and reach of children.
- If you must store items under the sink, use safety latches that lock every time you close the cabinet (most hardware stores and department stores have them). Store medicines and household products in their original containers.

### In the bathroom

- Buy and keep all medicines in containers with safety caps. But remember, these caps are child-resistant, not childproof, so store them in a locked cabinet.
- Discard any leftover prescription medicines by flushing them down the toilet.
- Store toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and other items used daily in a different cabinet from dangerous products.
- Take medicine where children cannot watch you; they may try to copy you.
- Call medicine by its correct name. You don't want to confuse your child by calling medicine candy.
- Check the label every time you give medicine. This will help you to be sure you are giving the right medicine in the right amounts to the right person. Mistakes are more common in the middle of the night, so always turn on a light when using any medicine.

### In the garage and basement

- Keep paints, varnishes, thinners, pesticides, and fertilizers in a locked cabinet in their original, labeled containers.
- Read labels on all household products before you buy them. Try to find the safest ones for the job. Buy only what you need to use right away.
- Store products in their original containers. Never put poisonous products in containers that were once used for food, especially empty drink bottles, cans, or cups.
- Open the garage door before starting your car.
- Be sure that coal, wood, or kerosene stoves and appliances are in good working order. If you smell gas, turn off the stove or gas burner, leave the house, and call the gas company.

### In the entire house

- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Contact your local fire department for information on how many you need and where to install them.

## Important information about syrup of ipecac

Syrup of ipecac is a drug that was used in the past to make children vomit after they had swallowed a poison. Although this may seem to make sense, this is not a good poison treatment. You should not make a child vomit in any way, including giving him syrup of ipecac, making him gag, or giving him saltwater. If you have syrup of ipecac in your home, flush it down the toilet and throw away the container.

## Treatment

### Swallowed poison

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

First, get the item 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 anything else that might help determine what your child swallowed.

Take the poison container with you to help the doctor determine what was swallowed. *Do not make your child vomit* because it may cause more damage.

**If a child is unconscious, not breathing, having convulsions or having seizures, call 911 or your local emergency number right away.**

If your child does not have these symptoms, call the poison center at **1-800-222-1222**. You may be asked for the following information:

- Your name and phone number.
- Your child's name, age, and weight.
- Any medical conditions your child has.
- Any medicine your child is taking.
- The name of the item your child swallowed. Read it off the container and spell 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 very dangerous, or if your child is very young, you may be told to take him right to the nearest hospital. If not, you will be told what to do at home.

### Poison on the skin

If your child spills a dangerous chemical on her body, remove her clothes and rinse the skin with room temperature water for at least 15 minutes, even if your child resists. Then call the poison center at **1-800-222-1222**. 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 room temperature water into the inner corner. It is easier if another adult holds your child while you rinse the eye. If another adult is not around, wrap your child tightly in a towel and clamp him under one arm. Then 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 at **1-800-222-1222**. Do not use an eyecup, eyedrops, or ointment unless the poison center tells you to.

### Poisonous 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 right
- Space heaters, ovens, stoves, or hot water heaters that use gas

If your child is exposed to fumes or gases, have her breathe fresh air right away. If she is breathing, call the poison center at **1-800-222-1222** about what to do next. If she has stopped breathing, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (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, then call 911.

## Remember

You can help make your home poison-safe by doing the following:

- Keep all medicines and household products locked up and out of your child's reach.
- Use safety latches on drawers and cabinets where you keep objects that may be dangerous to your child.
- Be prepared for a poisoning emergency. Post the poison help line number by every phone in your home. **1-800-222-1222** will connect you right away to your nearest poison center. (Be sure that your baby-sitter knows this number.)

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

## From your doctor

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