

Protect Your Child From Poison



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

The following is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics on how to prevent and treat poisonings in and around your home.

Prevention

Most poisonings occur when parents are not paying close attention. While you are busy doing other things, your child may be exploring closets or under bathroom sinks, where dangerous household items are often stored. Children are at risk for poisoning because they like to put things into their mouths and taste them. Remember to always keep a close eye on your child. Watch your child even more closely when you are away from home—especially at a grandparent's home, where medicines are often left out and within a child's reach.

The best way to keep your child safe from poisoning is to lock up dangerous household items out of your child's reach, including

- Medicines (especially those that contain iron)
- Cleaning products like dishwasher and laundry detergents, bleach, ammonia, and furniture polish
- Antifreeze, paint thinners, and windshield washer fluid
- Gasoline, kerosene, lamp oil
- Pesticides
- Alcohol

Always store medicines and household products in their original containers. Children can get confused if you put them in containers that were once used for food, especially empty drink bottles, cans, or cups. Also, 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.

Poison Help

- 1-800-222-1222 is a nationwide toll-free number that directs your call to your local poison center.
- Call 1-800-222-1222 if you have a poison emergency. This number will connect you right away to your nearest poison center. 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 poison prevention. You can find prevention information at <http://poisonhelp.hrsa.gov>.
- Be prepared. Post the Poison Help number by every phone in your home and program the number in your cell phone. Be sure that caregivers and babysitters know this number.

How to make your home poison-safe

In the kitchen

- Store medicines, cleaners, lye, furniture polish, dishwasher soap, and other dangerous products in locked cabinets, 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.

In the bathroom

- Keep all medicines in containers with safety caps. But remember, these caps are child resistant, not childproof, so store them in a locked cabinet.
- Get rid of leftover or expired medicines.
 - Take medicines to your police department if they have a drug collection program.
 - Check if your community has a household hazardous waste disposal program that takes medicines.
 - Mix medicines with coffee grounds or kitty litter, seal tightly in a plastic bag or container, and discard where children cannot get them. Remember to remove labels with personal information from prescription medicines.
 - Only flush medicines down the toilet or pour down the drain if the patient information materials say it's OK to do so.
- Store everyday items like toothpaste, soap, and shampoo 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 it 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 amount 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.
- 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.
- Open the garage door before starting your car to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- 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 alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Contact your local fire department for information on how many you need and where to install them.

Treatment

Swallowed poison

If you find your child with an open or empty container of a dangerous 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.

Do not make your child vomit because it may cause more damage.

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

If your child does not have these symptoms, call the Poison Help number, 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 item (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 to the nearest hospital. If your child is not in danger, the Poison Help staff will tell you what to do to help your child 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 Poison Help 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 Help number, 1-800-222-1222. Do not use an eyecup, eyedrops, or ointment unless Poison Help staff 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 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 Help number, 1-800-222-1222, and ask 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 number by every phone in your home and program the number in your cell phone. 1-800-222-1222 will connect you right away to your nearest poison center. (Be sure that your babysitter knows this number.)

Listing of resources does not imply an endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP is not responsible for the content of external resources. Information was current at the time of publication.

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

Important information about syrup of ipecac

Syrup of ipecac is a drug that was used in the past to make children vomit (or throw up) 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 salt water. If you have syrup of ipecac in your home, throw it out (see "In the bathroom" second bullet point).

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