

Poisoning Prevention

Poisonings can be a common household problem, if proper precautions aren't taken. Every year, Poison Centers throughout the country answer approximately 1.2 million calls for unintentional poisonings among children ages five and under. Children have a faster metabolism than adults, making anything that they ingest absorb into their bloodstream quickly.

Below are a few things to remember, especially when children are present.

Children are curious.

- About 3 out of 5 cases involve non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleansers, personal care products, plants, pesticides, art supplies, alcohol and toys.
- The same appealing colors and fragrances that attracted you to buy a product could also attract your child to smell and swallow that product.
- Child-resistant packaging is not childproof. Most two-year-olds can open a child-resistant container in 4 to 5 minutes.

Poisons in your home may be invisible.

- Carbon monoxide is a deadly gas that is difficult to detect because it is invisible, tasteless, and odorless. Carbon monoxide is produced by everyday fuel-burning appliances and equipment found in the home.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in your home for early detection. Remember that carbon monoxide alarms cannot detect smoke, so both alarms are important to have!

Medicines are helpful, but can be dangerous.

- Be sure that medications are taken in the proper dosage. Do not refer to the medicine as "candy" when giving it to a child.
- Keep medications and other potentially harmful substances in their original containers with their original labels, and flush expired medications down the toilet.

Know what to do in case of a poisoning emergency.

Not all poisonings will have symptoms. If someone in your home has ingested a substance, call the Poison Center from anywhere in the United States at 1-800-222-1222. The Poison Center is open 24 hours a day, including holidays. Be sure to call 911 if someone is choking, having difficulty breathing, or having a seizure.

For more information, visit the Washington Poison Center's website at www.wapc.org.

