

How To Prevent Poisonings

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than two million unintentional human poisoning exposures a year in the United States, and approximately 20,000 deaths. About 10,000 deaths occur in the home, many of them due to drug overdoses. These are frightening statistics and unnecessarily high. The first and best antidote is caution. Good Advice And Bad Medicine * Keep these telephone numbers by your phones: poison control center, doctor, and hospital. * Always follow label directions. Poisoning can occur by eating, drinking or inhaling a substance, or getting it on the skin or in the eyes. * Always read the label on any medication before you take it. * Discard drugs that are past their expiration date, or look or smell unusual. Flush them down the toilet. * Never take a medicine prescribed for another person. There might be side effects you do not know about, or an interaction with your medicine. * Don't take drugs in the dark. * To avoid overdoses, use a daily pill organizer. * People with poor eyesight and failing memory are at greater risk for unintentional drug misuse. This Isn't Kid Stuff More than one million unintentional poisoning exposures among children under six are reported to U.S. poison control centers each year. Almost 90 percent of these incidents occur in homes and involve common household items. * Lock up all medicines and keep medicines in child-resistant containers. However, don't rely solely on these containers. They are child-resistant not childproof. * If you're interrupted while using a product, take the product or child with you, or lock up the item. * Never leave open medications out of your sight. * If you must keep medicine by the bed when kids are around, use a lockable tackle box. * Grandparents: Put away and secure poisonous items before kids arrive. A disproportionately high number of childhood poisonings involve grandparents' drugs. * Place purses, bags and suitcases out of reach. * Teach children not to eat or drink anything unless it is given to them by an adult they know. * Never refer to any kind of medication as "candy" even when trying to coax children to take it. * Avoid taking medications in front of children. They will want to copy your actions. * Child exposures often occur in late afternoon or early evening when supervision may not be as strict. * Poisonings increase during periods when the household is disrupted (e.g. children visiting, holidays, personal crisis, moving). * Be alert for repeat poisonings. Children who swallow a poison are likely to try again within a year. * If you suspect a child has been exposed to a poisonous substance: -Remain calm, and keep the child calm. -Look in the child's mouth. Remove any remaining pills, pieces of plant, etc. -Take the child and the poison to the phone. Call the poison center or your doctor. Be prepared to give your child's age, weight, the product name on the label, when it was eaten, the amount swallowed, and the child's condition. Note: Most parents can identify the top three drugs used by children: alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Few parents realize that inhalants are the fourth drug group most commonly abused. And remember, tobacco is often the "gateway" to other drugs. * If you suspect your child is using illegal drugs, or abusing prescription drugs, seek professional help immediately. The Toxic Household * Do not store household and cleaning products in the same place you store food. * Keep all products in their original containers. * Contact a local nursery or poison control center to find nontoxic plants to buy. More than 700 species of plants are harmful to humans. Ingestion of house plants is a leading cause of calls to poison centers. * Store cleaning supplies or other poisonous products in cabinets with childproof locks, or closets that require a key to open. * Never mix a "home brew" cleaning product without first checking the poison control center.

About the Author

John Myre is the author of the award-winning book, *Live Safely in a Dangerous World*, <http://www.safetytimes.com>, and the publisher of the *Safety Times* Reproducible Articles, <http://www.safetytimes.com/repro.htm>.

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