

Poison Prevention

Each year poison control centers report nearly one million children under the age of five are exposed to potentially poisonous medicines and household chemicals.

Young children will eat and drink almost anything.

To a small child who cannot read, poisons can be appealing. For example, vitamins can look like candy and windshield washer fluid (one teaspoon of which if swallowed can cause blindness or even death) is packaged in a milk-like container and is sweet to taste. Make your children aware of dangerous look-alike products. Teach them never to assume something is food - ALWAYS ASK AN ADULT!

Always return to safe storage immediately (locked up - away from children).

Always store pesticides and other household chemicals, including chlorine bleach, out of children's reach - preferably in a locked cabinet.

Never leave a bottle of aspirin or other pills where children can reach it. Return it to a safe place immediately after using. Medicines are often swallowed by young children who find medicines where their grandparents have left them. Grandparents - and all adults - should use child resistant closures whenever young children are around. Keep medicines out of reach and out of sight of all children.

Keep rodent and insect baits where small children cannot reach them.

Read directions carefully.

Always read directions carefully because pesticide products, household cleaning products, and pet products can be dangerous.

Before applying pesticides or other household chemicals, remove children and their toys, as well as pets, from the area. Keep children and pets away until the pesticide has dried or as long as is recommended on the label.

If your use of a pesticide or other household chemical is interrupted (perhaps by a phone call), properly reclose the container and remove it from children's reach. Always purchase household products that has child-resistant packaging.

Keep all products in original containers.

Never transfer pesticides, kerosene, anti-freeze, paints, or solvents to other containers that children may associate with food or drink (like soda bottles). Never transfer hazardous products to a bottle without a child resistant closure.

Never call medicine "candy."

Give medicine and vitamins in a very matter-of-fact way. The idea should be: *"This will help you get well,"* **NOT** *"This will taste good,"* or *"This is just like candy."*

If children are deceived into thinking medicine is "candy," they may, when left alone, locate the bottle and eat or drink its contents.

Check your home for poisons.

Almost any product within your home environment can be potentially poisonous. Check every room, especially the garage and basement to make sure these products cannot be seen or reached by children.

| Check for poisons in every part of your home. | | |
|--|---|--|
| Bathroom Air freshener Antiseptics Aspirin Bathroom bowl cleaner Boric acid Bubble bath Camphor Corn & wart remover | Denture cleaner Decorant Hair dye Medicine Mouthwash Powder, baby & face Rubbing alcohol Shampoo & rinse Soap | Bedroom Cosmetics Medicine Mothballs Nail polish & remover Perfume, cologne & aftershave |
| Living Room Alcoholic beverages Cigarettes Flowers Plants | Kitchen Ammonia Bleach Cleaners Copper & brass cleaner Detergent Drain cleaner | Floor wax Furniture polish Glue Ink Medicine Vitamins |
| Garage/Basement Antifreeze Charcoal lighter fluid Clearing fluid | Fertilizer Gasoline & motor oil Linseed oil Lye | Paint thinner & remover Pesticide Turpentine Windshield washer solution |

Tips for handling medicines.

- Never give medicines in the dark.
- Read the dosage instructions printed on all prescription container labels carefully and follow what they say.
- Dispose of leftover pills, medicinal liquids (even household products) when they are no longer needed. Dispose of them by pouring them down the drain or toilet, so they are beyond the reach of young hands.
- Never re-use a drug "you happen to have around the house" without first checking with your doctor.
- Always keep on hand a one-ounce bottle of Syrup of Ipecac, an over-the-counter medicine that induces vomiting. However, use **only** if the emergency personnel tell you to do so. Its use will depend on what the child has swallowed.
- Keep the phone number of your Poison Control Center on your telephone. If your child swallows any household chemical or medicine, call the Poison Control Center.

Author: Joan E. LeFebvre, Professor, Department of Family Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension
 Reviewer: Elaine Andrews, Environmental Education Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension
 Layout: Penny Otte, Program Assistant I, Family Living Area Office, Vilas County

Poison Control Centers in Wisconsin

For Eastern Wisconsin:

**Children's Hospital of Wisconsin,
Milwaukee**

1-800-815-8855 or 414-266-2222

For Western Wisconsin:

University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison

1-800-815-8855 or 608-262-3702

How safe is your home?

Use the following questions to make sure the poisons in your home are kept in safe places. *You can prevent a poisoning tragedy in your home.*

Bathroom

- Are old medicines destroyed?
- Are all medicines out of children's reach?
- Are powerful medicines locked up?
- Are bathroom cleaners and disinfectants kept out of children's reach?
- Are poisons, as such, kept separate from all medicines?

Kitchen and Utility Room

- Are detergents and household chemicals out of children's reach?
- Are oven cleaners and polishing compounds kept in a safe place?
- Are floor waxes and furniture polish kept in a safe place?
- Are bleaches and disinfectants out of children's reach?

Garage and Shop

- Are paints and solvents kept in a safe place?
- Are there safeguards on gasoline, kerosene, oil, charcoal lighter, etc?
- Are insecticides, weed killers, plant sprays, and plant foods kept out of children's reach?

Sources:

- "Everyday is Poison Prevention Day." Caring for Kids newsletter, Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1996.
- "Health & Safety Briefs." Family Information Services, Minneapolis, MN. 1994.
- "Locked Up Poisons Prevent Tragedy." Poison Prevention Week Council/Consumer Product Safety Commission. 1993.
- "Pesticides & Child Safety." Environmental Protection Agency. 1997.
- "Tips on Child Safety." Closure Manufacturers Association. 1998.

For more information on Parenting the Child Development, contact: Joan E. LeFebvre, Area Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 330 Court Street, Courthouse, Eagle River WI 54521-8362, 715-479-3653, FAX 715-479-3605, E-Mail joan.lefebvre@ces.uwex.edu
 March 1999