

PATIENT INFORMATION

What to do if a poisoning occurs

1. Get the bottle or container from which the product was eaten.
2. Contact a Poison Centre or a hospital and read the label or labels to help identify the poisonous ingredient.
3. If told to go to the hospital, take the bottle with you.
4. If a leaf was eaten, take a sample of a leaf from the offending plant.

REMEMBER: Take any bottle or sample that will help identify the poisonous product.

SEE ALSO: Patient Information Pamphlet: *Syrup of Ipecac for Poison Treatment.*

A child must be free to explore his environment in order to grow into a well-rounded, well-adjusted person. It is our responsibility to make his environment as free from hazards as possible.

POISON CONTROL NUMBER:

565-2442

Prepared by Foothills Hospital Drug Information Centre
in conjunction with Dr. G. Powell

POISON PREVENTION



EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

PRINCE GEORGE REGIONAL HOSPITAL

POISON PREVENTION

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

Every day children and adults (especially the elderly) are accidentally poisoned by eating or drinking a hazardous substance. **What is a poison?** By definition, a poison is a substance that upon entering the body (by any route - for example, eating), even in small amounts, can cause damage to tissue or disturb bodily functions.

Potential poisons include a long list of **household items** some of which are: cleaning products such as bleaches, detergents, lye and other caustics; polishes and waxes; kerosene, lighter fluids, fuel oils; paints, turpentine, paint removers and thinners; pesticides (including mothballs), weed killers, fertilizers; cosmetics, including nail polish, hair sprays and permanent wave materials.

Other potential poisons are specific **drug products**. Drugs should never be taken in larger doses than either recommended or prescribed, because in excessive quantities all drugs can be harmful (and poisonous). Even something as common as aspirin or acetaminophen must be taken **only** as recommended by the prescriber or manufacturer.

We must remember that some **plants** (leaves and berries) can also be very poisonous. If a child eats a leaf of a plant, it is important to contact an informed person immediately, to find out if it was indeed a harmful plant.

Poison prevention is very important; accidents occur when we least expect them! **A father was polishing the furniture with a chemical mixture that was in an old mug. He stepped out of the room for a minute, only to return and discover that his one (1) year old child had helped himself to the remainder of the contents of the mug...**

An accidental poisoning involves much upset and worry. This can be avoided if a few basic precautionary measures are followed:

1. Be sure all medications and household products are labelled accurately. **Read and heed** the labels and written instructions.
2. **Keep out of reach of children.** Store medications in a high locked cabinet; store household products on high shelves, **not** below the sink; store kerosene, paint thinners, etc., out of the house in well marked containers, preferably in a locked cupboard.

3. Return hazardous products immediately to safe storage area after use.
4. Keep drugs and household products in original containers. Do not put or store medications or chemicals in cups, glasses or soft drink bottles, as children associate those with beverages that they are accustomed to drinking.
5. Dispose of unused portions and empty containers. Flush unused portions down the toilet, rinse the containers and put them in the garbage. **DO NOT PUT MEDICATION IN THE GARBAGE.**
6. Use child-resistant packaging whenever possible. If this is not possible, be sure to screw lids on very tightly.
7. Teach children that all medications, including flavoured types, are **not** candy, and should only be accepted from an adult.
8. Do not take medication in front of children, as they like to imitate adults and may do so with harmful results.
9. Make sure there is adult supervision when children are around potentially harmful substances, particularly when visiting other people's homes where there are no children.
10. If the doorbell or telephone rings while administering a medication or handling a household product, return medication to a safe place or take it with you. **Do not leave it unattended.**
11. Do not store medications and food together.
12. Do not use any product or drug at night without turning on the lights beforehand.
13. Teach children to leave household products, drugs and plants alone, and to stay out of storage areas. Remember that kitchens and garages are as important as storage areas and are likely to be overlooked as potential sites for accidental poisoning.
14. Do not handle medicine when under the influence of alcohol.
15. Keep a first aid booklet handy. These are inexpensive, easy to follow, and available in every town.
16. Make sure emergency phone numbers are close by the telephone or in the medicine chest.

Never underestimate the ability of children to climb and find poisonous products