

March is Childhood Poisoning Prevention Month

This month we partner with the [American Association of Poison Control Centers](https://www.aapcc.org/) to bring you important information in time for National Poison Prevention Week (March 18-24).



Children Act Fast, So Do Poisons

It only takes seconds for children to get a hold of something poisonous. Two of the characteristics that we usually nurture and encourage in our kids – intelligence and curiosity – can be disastrous when it comes to keeping them safe.

Did you know that someone calls a U.S. poison control center about every 12 seconds? Every year poison control centers help over a million parents and caregivers when kids get into things that could harm them, like medicines, cleaning chemicals, even the mushrooms growing in the backyard! Poisoning is the #1 cause of injury death in the U.S., and the number of children who die from poisoning each year has more than doubled since 1999¹. Over half of the cases managed by poison control centers each year involve children 12 and under.

The vast majority of these cases involve kids swallowing something, but poisoning can happen via the eyes, skin, and lungs, too. Here are the top ten substances involved in calls to poison control for kids 12 and under:

1. Cosmetics and personal care products, like hand sanitizer, deodorant, and nail polish remover
2. Household cleaning products
3. Pain relieving medicines, both over-the-counter and prescription
4. Foreign bodies like toys and coins
5. Medicinal creams, like acne cream and hydrocortisone cream
6. Anti-allergy medicines
7. Vitamins, especially chewable vitamins that taste good
8. Pesticides and insect repellants
9. Dietary Supplements, herbals, and homeopathic remedies
10. Plants, both indoor and outdoor

The experts that answer the poison control hotline 24/7, year-round want parents and caregivers to understand that *anything*, even water, can be poisonous when used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person. And poisoning is not just about swallowing something dangerous. Poisoning can happen via the eyes, skin, and lungs, too. So, keeping your kids safe from accidental poisoning is not about getting everything that might be toxic out of your house. That would be an impossible charge, and really inconvenient, too! Rather, effective poisoning prevention is about taking precautions when it comes to using, storing, and discarding household substances, and being prepared in the event that the unthinkable happens.

Prevent Childhood Poisoning and Protect the Children in Your Life

- **BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY.** Make sure you have the national, free number for poison control saved in your phone and posted in your home. That number is 1 (800) 222-1222.

Anyone can call any time, whether it's an emergency, or if you just have questions about a product or substance. Don't be embarrassed to call; calls are private, and our poison specialists have heard it all!

- **PRACTICE SAFE STORAGE HABITS.** The following substances are particularly dangerous for kids and should be stored up, away, and out of sight. Alternatively, keep these substances in child-resistant cabinets or containers. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a child-proof lock or container, and there is no substitution for adult supervision and vigilance.
 - All medications and pharmaceuticals, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements
 - Alcoholic beverages, and products that contain alcohol, like hand sanitizer and screen cleaners
 - Tobacco and e-cigarette products, especially liquid nicotine
 - Laundry and cleaning supplies, especially single load laundry detergent packets
 - Pesticides and insect repellants
 - Button batteries, like those found in singing greeting cards, key fobs, and remote controls
 - Any type of oil or lubricant, including fragrance oils, tiki torch oils, engine oil, etc.
 - Personal care products, such as hair products and contact lens disinfectants
 - Other chemicals, such as antifreeze

- **READ AND FOLLOW LABELS AND DIRECTIONS.** Make a habit of reviewing the label on anything that has one prior to use, *especially* before administering medications to children. Take care to follow not only usage directions, but the directions provided for safe storage and disposal as well. Call your poison control center at **1 (800) 222-1222** if you have any questions about the directions.

- **DETECT INVISIBLE THREATS.** Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home.

The old saying is true – an ounce of caution is really worth a pound of cure. But if you find yourself needing help, don't hesitate to call your poison control center

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Website. Unintentional poisoning fatalities and injuries, children ages 19 and under. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>