

HOME ECONOMICS GUIDE



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Poison Prevention For Children

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Nobody really wishes to harm a child but each year over 700,000 children accidentally poison themselves and 2,000 die by drinking cleaning fluids, eating aspirin, or swallowing many other dangerous substances around the house. Children are curious. They want to find out about everything around them. Unlike adults who may approach the unknown with caution, children get into all sorts of situations as they explore.

Exploring the environment is the way children learn. Infants in a crib examine everything around them. As they begin to crawl and walk, children reach, touch, and inevitably taste all that is around them. As they grow they are able to get to even more places and find even more substances to examine. As children begin to climb, high shelves and cabinets are within their reach.

The point of poison prevention is to emphasize the proper use and storage of medicines and household products. Be sure that any substance is used only as directed or it could produce harmful effects. Obviously, children cannot read the directions or warnings. Even if verbal warnings are given, remember children's memories may be short and they may not be able to recall an explanation of danger or realize its meaning. It is the adult's responsibility to take precautions and to be alert. If children are to be protected during these formative years, it will be necessary to rearrange the storage of medicines and household products as children's reach, mobility, and ingenuity increase. What may have been effective storage when children could only crawl becomes challenging as they climb to the counter and reach into the cabinet.

Be aware of potential dangers. Imagine what you might do if you were a child and saw pretty colored pills or easily grasped containers. Remember, if children can't see it, they probably will not search for it. If the storage area is locked, children won't be able to get to it.

What should you do when a child accidentally swallows a poison?

The principle of first aid is to get the poison **OUT**, or **OFF**, or to **DILUTE** it.

Always, call a physician, poison control center, hospital or police rescue unit promptly!

Be sure to keep the remaining contents of the bottle, can, or box to identify the poison and to estimate how much was swallowed.

FIRST AID MEASURES FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF POISONING

Swallowed Poisons - Any non-food substance is a potential poison.

- Call physician, poison control center, hospital, or police rescue unit promptly. Tell clearly and briefly what poison or overdose was taken and if you know, how much. Ask what to do until you can get help.
- Determine if poison should be diluted.
- **DILUTE** - If swallowed poison was corrosive (lye, strong acid, drain cleaner, etc.) or contained kerosene, gasoline, or other petroleum distillate.
- Dilute poison by giving water—one or two glasses.

To Induce Vomiting

- Give one tablespoonful (½ ounce) of syrup of ipecac for a child one year of age or older, plus at least one cup of water. If no vomiting occurs in 20 minutes, this dose may be repeated *only once*.
- If no ipecac is available try to induce vomiting by tickling back of throat with a spoon handle or your finger or other *blunt object* after giving water.
- When vomiting begins, make sure child's face is down and that the mouth is lower than hips to prevent any fluid from entering the lungs.
- Do not waste time waiting for vomiting—get the child to a medical facility. Bring package or container with you.
- Do *not* make child vomit if child is unconscious or having fits.

Fumes or Gases

For example, this could be any fuel gases, auto exhaust, dense smoke, or fumes from poisonous chemicals.

- Get child into fresh air.
- Loosen clothing.
- If child is not breathing, start artificial respiration promptly. Do not stop until child is breathing well or help arrives.
- If necessary, take child to medical facility promptly or call rescue unit.

Substances in the Eye

- With eyelids open, gently wash eye out immediately, using plenty of water (or milk in an emergency) and continue for five minutes.
- Do not rub eyes.
- Call physician, poison control center, hospital, or police rescue unit and take child to medical facility if necessary.

Acids, Lye, Other Caustics, Pesticides on the Skin

- Wash off skin immediately with large amount of water. Use soap if possible.
- Remove any contaminated clothing.
- Call physician, poison control center, hospital, or police rescue unit and take child to medical facility if possible.

Remember that poison proofing at home is not difficult. There may be some inconvenience, But, isn't it worth it?

What can you do to make your home safe?

- Keep all known and potentially poisonous compounds in high, closed cabinets.
- Keep poisons in their original containers. Poisons in containers normally kept for food or beverages are especially hazardous.
- Store cleaning compounds, waxes, petroleum products, medicines, cosmetics separately from food.
- Never allow children to rummage through purses.
- Get rid of unused medicines and household products by emptying them down the toilet or drain. Rinse the container before discarding it.
- Dispose of prescription medicines as soon as the illness for which they were prescribed is over.
- Do not take medication in any form in front of a youngster. The child may imitate that action.
- Never tell a child that medicine is candy or is like candy. Tell the child it is medicine.
- Try to buy potentially dangerous products in child-resistant packaging and remember to close them properly after each use.
- Never give medicine in the dark or without measuring as directed to avoid giving the wrong amount or wrong medication.
- When the telephone or doorbell rings, take the furniture polish or cleaner with you. Don't leave it somewhere to tempt a child.

What are some common poisons around the house?

Cosmetics

dipilatories
shaving creams and lotions
colognes, perfumes
nail polish and remover
cuticle remover
astringents
permanent wave solutions
suntan creams and oils
hair lotion, creams, shampoos

Garage and Workshop Items

paints, varnishes, shellacs
paint thinners and removers
insect sprays
rat poisons
auto polishes and waxes
plastic menders, glues
gasoline

Medicine Cabinet Items

prescription medications
cough syrups
aspirin
boric acid
camphorated oil
oil of wintergreen
rubbing alcohol and liniments
laxatives
antiseptics
iodine

Kitchen, Laundry, Cleaning Aids

bleaches
drain cleaners
dyes
detergents
dry cleaners
floor and rug cleaners
lye
ammonia
furniture waxes and polishes
metal and jewelry cleaners
and polishers

Other

kerosenes
certain chemicals used in photographic development
leather preservatives
moth balls and crystals
deodorizers
rust preventatives and removers
typewriter cleaner
certain wax crayons

Houseplant Dangers

There are many plants children may eat which can harm them. U.S. poison centers report children under five-years-old are the largest group injured. Here are some safety rules to follow and teach your children.

- (1) NEVER eat or chew on an unknown plant.
- (2) MAKE A FIRM RULE for your children to never put into the mouth, or eat parts of any garden or wild plants, berries, nuts, flowers, stems, roots unless they are told to by someone who knows plants.
- (3) NEVER make your own "nature tea" or natural herb garden collection unless you know the plant's true name.
- (4) LEARN to know and identify poisonous plants and which parts are poisonous in your community.
- (5) COMPOST pruning clippings, garden wastes, etc. Don't feed them to livestock because it may be harmful.
- (6) STORE seeds, bulbs, etc. away from children's reach.
- (7) NEVER chew on jewelry made from plant parts such as seeds.

- (8) IMMEDIATELY call a doctor, hospital or poison control center if a plant has been eaten.

Remember, do not take chances on accidental poisoning. Do not leave beans, berries or bulbs around where children play even if they are not proven to be toxic.

References

1. American Academy of Pediatrics, *First Aid Treatment for Poisoning*, 1968, Evanston, Ill. 60204.
2. Freese, Arthur S., *Protecting Your Family From Accidental Poisoning*, Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 459, 107, Public Affairs Committee, 381 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.
3. Maisel, George S., National Clearinghouse for Poison Control Centers and J. C. Ervin, Chairperson, National Planning Council, 1971 Poison Prevention Week.
4. National Safety Council, *Home Poison Prevention*, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

Home Checklist

Kitchen	✓	
		no household products under sink
		no medicines on counter
		all cleaners out of reach
		no medicine on windowsill
Bathroom		medicine chest cleaned regularly
		old medicines thrown out
		all medicines in safety containers
		always read the label
		always turn on a light when taking medicine at night
Bedroom		no medicines on dresser, chest or bedside table
		all perfumes and cosmetics out of reach
		no flaking paint chips on crib or playpen
Laundry		soaps and detergents up high
		all cleaners out of reach
		furniture and metal polish up high
		drain cleaners in safety containers
Garage		bug spray and weed killers up high
		no gasoline in beverage bottles or cups
		turpentine and paint thinner in original containers and up high

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