

Poisoning: What to Do

Be Prepared – But It's Okay to Overreact!

Is your refrigerator covered with cute magnets, notes, and awesome juvenile artwork? Well, clear the upper right hand corner and post all the emergency numbers your family could possibly need. Keep the list short and make sure your family is familiar with the contacts on that list. A critical phone number on that list should be **1-800-222-1222**. This is a toll free number available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to anyone in the United States. This number's operator will connect you to a local poison control center. There are 61 poison control centers in the United States. Each maintains information for medical personnel or the public on the recommended treatments for ingestion or contact with household products and medicines that could be toxic. Call 911 if the person is unconscious, convulsing, unable to breathe, or any other serious physical symptoms that would indicate that the person is in danger. Many poisons act quickly, so it's okay to "overreact."



In 2005, approximately 91,000 young children visited hospital emergency rooms as a result of unintentional poisoning. The National Network of Poison Control Centers fields more than one million calls concerning accidental poisoning. Many new parents or caregivers lack the necessary information to identify an accidental poisoning or to prevent one from happening.

Prevention Is the Key

Prevention is key to keeping family members safe from accidental poisoning. From 2002 through 2004, approximately 36 children under the age of five died as a result of swallowing poisonous substances found in or around the home. Small children do before they think. Very small children use their highly sensitive lips and mouths to explore the world, and that's why everything and anything goes to the mouth. A bottle of brightly colored cleaner might look like a tasty drink to your toddler. Medicine capsules might look like candy, and not all medicines have child-proof caps. Explain the hazards of drinking, eating, or touching dangerous substances to all children old enough to understand and read for themselves.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and U.S. Pharmacopeia contributed to the following safety tips.

- Don't take medicines prescribed for someone else.
- Check all medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) for expiration dates and discard old ones by flushing them down the toilet. Rinse containers, wrap securely, and put these in tamper-proof trashcans.
- Store medicines out of the reach of children. Use child-resistant caps and keep these in locked position.
- Do not take medicines in front of a child and refer to medicines by their proper name. Never refer to them lightly as candy or fun pills, etc.
- Protect children from medicines in others homes and keep children away from others' purses, backpacks, briefcases, and suitcases.
- Take all medicines as prescribed and take them in a well-lit room. Re-read dosage instructions before ingesting. If the labeling is unclear, call a pharmacist.
- When household products are in use, keep children in sight even if you are going to answer the phone or doorbell.
- Ensure that any babysitter is aware of the hazards and knows where to find the right phone numbers.
- Do not store medicine or household chemicals in anything but original containers. For example, do not store in soda bottles.