

Poison

Protecting Your Family



When it comes to unintentional childhood poisonings, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You can best protect your children by keeping harmful substances out of their sight and reach, and by testing for lead and carbon monoxide. Because no prevention method is 100 percent effective, being prepared can keep poison exposure from turning into tragedy for you and your family.

Eliminate potential hazards:

- **Know which household products are poisonous.** Something as common as mouthwash can be harmful if a child swallows a large amount.
- **Buy child-resistant packaging.** Child-resistant caps do not guarantee that children cannot open a container but may deter them from trying or slow them down long enough for you to intervene.
- **Never leave potentially poisonous household products unattended while in use.** It takes only seconds for a poisoning to occur.
- **Don't create new cleaning solutions by mixing different products designed for other uses.** The new mixtures may be harmful to children and may not be stored in properly labeled or child-resistant containers.
- **Always read labels and follow the exact directions.** Give children medicines based on their weights and ages, and only use the dispenser that comes packaged with children's medications.

Prepare your home:

- **Store all household products and medications locked out of sight and reach of children.**
- **Keep all products in original containers.** Never put a potentially poisonous product in something other than its original container, where it could be mistaken for something harmless.
- **Know which plants in and around your home are poisonous;** either remove them or make them inaccessible to children.
- **Throw away old medicines and other potential poisons.** Check your garage, basement and other storage areas for cleaning and work supplies that you no longer need.
- **Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home.** It is estimated that these detectors, designed to sound an alarm before dangerous levels of carbon monoxide accumulate, may prevent up to half of carbon monoxide poisoning deaths. If the alarm sounds, leave the house immediately and call the fire department, local utility company or emergency medical services from a neighbor's home.
- **If your home was built before 1978, have it tested for lead-based paint.** Cover lead paint with a sealant or hire a professional to remove it. Wash children's hands and faces, toys and pacifiers frequently to reduce the risk of ingesting lead-contaminated dust.
- Post the national toll-free poison hotline number at every telephone: **1-800-222-1222.**
- **Keep activated charcoal on hand, and use it only at the advice of a poison control center or physician.**

Teach safety:

- **Teach children never to put leaves, stems, bark, seeds, nuts or berries from any plant into their mouths.**
- **Never refer to medicine or vitamins as "candy."** Referring to medicine as candy could cause a child to think that it is harmless or pleasant to eat. Since children tend to mimic adults, avoid taking medications in front of them.
- **Teach grandparents and relatives to take precautions.** Before your children visit their homes, ask grandparents to purchase a bottle of activated charcoal to keep on hand and to post phone numbers to the local poison control center and their local physician near all of their telephones. When relatives visit your home, suitcases containing medicines should be stored where children cannot reach them.