

Keep Children Safe from Poisons

While harm from poisoning is a concern for people of all ages, children in the toddler and preschool age groups are the most likely to be poisoned. Children at this stage are curious and quick, and they explore everything in their world without fear often by tasting. They like to imitate what they see grown-ups doing, like getting things out of high cabinets, using spray cleaners and taking medicines. Poisoning is one of the most common -and preventable - injuries of childhood.

What is a poison?

Poisons are chemical substances that can cause harm if used in the wrong way, or by the wrong person. Some poisons may cause harm if they get into your eyes, or if you breathe them. Others are dangerous if they are swallowed or spilled onto skin.

Children are poisoned *at home* in almost 90 percent of poison cases. There are hundreds of poisons in nearly every home. Some examples of poisons include:

- ◆ Bug sprays
- ◆ Carbon monoxide (gas)
- ◆ Cleaning products
- ◆ Cosmetics
- ◆ Gasoline and lighter fluids
- ◆ Medicines
- ◆ Mothballs
- ◆ Plants and mushrooms
- ◆ Spiders and snakes

To keep children safe from poison chemicals and medicines in the home:

Store all chemicals and medicines separately and safely. These should be kept out of sight in a locked cabinet. Just putting poisons and medicines "up high" is not safe enough, since many children older than about 18 months can climb to reach them.

Don't leave a container out for "just a minute." Many poisonings happen when an adult using a product is interrupted or distracted, such as leaving it to go answer the phone or doorbell.

Choose products in containers that are hard for children to open. Replace the cap tightly after using a product, but remember that no container can promise to always keep children out. Child resistant caps just aren't truly "child proof".

Take your medicines where children cannot see you. They may try to imitate you.

Have a working carbon monoxide alarm in your home.



Be extra careful with products that look or smell like candy or drinks, because they may attract children. Examples are window cleaners that look like blue drinks, lamp oils that look like apple juice, and pills that look like candy. Even adults can be fooled by "look-alike" products.

Discuss precautions with grandparents and caregivers. Their homes might not be as child-safe as yours.

Know what to do in case of a poisoning. If you think that someone may have touched or tasted a possible poison or medicine, don't guess ... be sure, **Call the Virginia Poison Center right away at 1-800-222-1222.** Don't waste precious time on old-fashioned treatments like milk or sticking fingers into the throat, and don't wait to see if sickness occurs - some poisons

Call the Virginia Poison Center for a free sticker or magnet with the emergency number.

**POISON
Help**
1-800-222-1222

Virginia Poison Center
VCU Medical Center Richmond, Virginia
Statewide #: (800) 222-1222
(In Richmond): (804) 828-9123
www.vapoison.org

VCU Medical Center
Virginia Commonwealth University