



# Poison Prevention News

June, 2015



Virginia Poison Center  
VCU Medical Center  
Richmond, VA

## *SWIMMING POOL CHEMICALS: Handle with Care*

We are just now entering into pool season and many families will be spending much of their time relaxing and enjoying the crystal clear pool water. But, to keep that pool glistening, it must be adequately maintained with a variety of chemicals. Most pool chemicals can lead to injury to the skin, eyes, and lungs by either direct contact or by inhaling fumes produced by the chemicals. The type and extent of injury is dependent on the type of chemical, the concentration, the product formulation (such as liquid or granular) and the length of time involved during the exposure. Knowing the correct actions to take in case of a chemical exposure is important.

If pool chemicals get on the skin, they should immediately be washed off with a LOT of running tap water. Chemicals in the eyes must be quickly flushed with a gentle stream of room temperature tap water for at least 15 minutes. Simply wiping the eye

with a wet cloth is not enough to get chemicals out of the eye. After rinsing the skin or eyes well, call the Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for advice on additional treatment needed.

When pool or spa chemicals are stored outside or in areas that have high temperatures, they may produce vapors that can build up inside the closed container. The person opening the container then gets a “blast” of chemical vapors that can be harmful when inhaled. If you have asthma or are a smoker, you are especially likely to have a reaction to the vapors. Mild nose and throat irritation, coughing and shortness of breath may result from breathing in the concentrated vapors. If these symptoms happen, get into fresh air immediately. Then, call the Virginia Poison Center for treatment advice at 1-800-222-1222.

## *PREVENTION TIPS*

- ⇒ Never mix chemicals unless the product label states to do so.
- ⇒ Follow labels exactly regarding use, storage and disposal.
- ⇒ Avoid the vapors by opening containers away from your face.
- ⇒ Always store chemical products in their original containers.
- ⇒ Wear protective gloves or goggles as directed by the product manufacturer.
- ⇒ Program the Virginia Poison Center emergency phone number into your cell phone.  
**1-800-222-1222**
- ⇒ Make sure your community pools have a Virginia Poison Center phone sticker on all public and office phones.

## SUNSCREENS

Using sunscreen during the summer months is a necessity to prevent sunburn and other damage to the skin. Sunscreens are specifically designed to protect the skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Many sunscreens in the past used para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA), but most today contain Cinnamates (oils derived from cinnamon), Padimate-O (oxybenzone compound derived from PABA), salicylates (aspirin-like compounds), and zinc oxide (a skin protectant). It is recommended to use a sunscreen that has a SPF rating of 15 or higher which protects against both UV-A and UV-B rays.

**Water-Resistant Sunscreens** last only 40 minutes when in the water and should be reapplied at every pool rest break or at a minimum every hour.

**Water-Proof Sunscreens** last for up to 80 minutes when in the water and should be re-applied accordingly.

**Hypoallergenic Sunscreens** should be chosen if you have a history of skin allergies or develop allergic responses to similar products.

**Non-comedogenic Sunscreens** should be chosen if you have a history of acne or other similar skin problems.

**Sunscreens past the expiration date** should not be used since they may become less effective and not provide adequate protection.

**Skin Test** all new products on a small spot to the back of the hand to check for potential allergic reactions. If itching or redness is noted, wash product off immediately and call the Virginia Poison Center for treatment recommendations.

**Apply Sunscreen** in an even layer 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Do not "rub it in" since this will diminish its effectiveness. Don't forget your ears, neck, scalp, face, and lips!

**Sunscreen can be worn** under lipstick and make-up.

**Wear protective clothing** and stay in the shade when possible. Minimize sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. when the sun is the hottest.

**Some medications may make you burn easier.** Check with your pharmacist to see if your medicine can increase your risk for sunburn.

## Debunking Sunscreen Myths

- ⇒ Sunscreen does NOT cause blindness if it gets into the eye.
- ⇒ Sunscreen is still needed on cloudy days. The UV rays pass through clouds and water easily.
- ⇒ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the use of sunscreen on infants younger than 6 months of age, though keeping them out of the sun is preferred.
- ⇒ One application of sunscreen does NOT provide "All Day" protection. A good way to estimate duration time (when not in the water) is to first determine the length of time it takes you to have some minor sunburn without sunscreen and then multiply that by the SPF factor. Example: it takes you 20 minutes to get slightly pink without sunscreen. 20 minutes x 20 SPF = 400 minutes without burning.

**Please contact the Virginia Poison Center  
1-800-222-1222  
for copies of any of the following  
Summer Poison Fact Sheets**

Bites and Stings  
Carbon Monoxide  
First Aid for Poisoning  
Household Cleaning Products  
Pets and Poisons  
Plant Safety  
Snake Bites  
Additional copies of this newsletter

**Call the Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 if you believe someone has been exposed to a suspected poison or has taken an overdose of a medication. Calls are answered 24 hours a day and are free of charge. Registered Nurses with expert training in the management and science of poisons answer all calls. Receive immediate expert advice any where ~ any time ~ any day.**

Virginia Poison Center  
VCU Health System  
P.O. Box 980522  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Office: (804) 828-4780  
Fax: (804) 828-5291

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

