



Poison Prevention: Tips to Minimize Your Child's Risks

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Since the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906, numerous legislative and product engineering efforts have been implemented to reduce the risk of injury or death from poisoning. For example, child proof packaging now required by law on certain products prevented 86,000 poison exposures from 1974 to 1981 and decreased deaths by aspirin ingestion by 34 percent from 1973 to 1990.

Despite these successes, poisoning remains a common threat to the health and safety of children. Approximately 1.3 million children are exposed to poison every year in the United States. Since 90 percent of poison exposures occur at home, consider these tips to minimize the chance that your child could become poisoned:

- Keep harmful products locked up and out of your child's sight and reach. This includes medications (both prescription and over-the-counter), cleaning agents, and other household, garage, and garden chemicals.
 - Use safety latches or locks on drawers and cabinets where you keep dangerous items. Also consider putting hazardous products in an elevated, hard to reach cabinet or locked container. Remember that these drawer locks and latches can wear out over time so check them periodically for proper functioning.
 - Call medicine by its correct name. You do not want to confuse the child by calling medicine candy. Always replace the safety caps immediately after use. Never let a child play with a bottle of medicine, even if it is empty, as this may confuse younger children.
 - Teach children not to drink or eat anything unless it is given to them by an adult. Never put non food products in food or drink containers. Never leave alcoholic beverages within a child's reach.
 - Seek immediate help if your child swallows a substance that is not food. Do not make your child vomit. Instead call the Poison Help Line at (800) 222-1222. Have the container of the ingested substance available to report to the Poison Center. It is also important to be able to estimate how much of the harmful product may have been ingested.
 - If you find your child unresponsive, not breathing, or having trouble breathing following a chemical exposure, immediately call 911.
 - Keep products in their original containers. Read labels with care before using any product. Be especially cautious with "look alike" substances (many household cleaning fluids have the same appearance as colorful children's beverages).
 - Do not take medicine in front of small children. Children tend to copy adult behavior.
 - Check your home often for old medications and old-fashioned treatments such as oil of wintergreen, boric acid, ammoniated mercury, oil of turpentine, and camphorated oil. It is no longer appropriate to dispose of old medicines by flushing them down the toilet. Instead, check with your pharmacist or your physician on how best to get rid of old medicines. Many counties or municipalities have hazardous chemical collections once or twice a year. Dispose of harmful household chemicals at one of these events.
 - If your child spends a large amount of time in another person's house (such as a grandparent or baby sitter), check to make sure these tips are employed to decrease the chance of poisoning. Offer to assist your friends and family in making their home safe for your child.
- Fortunately, most poisoning exposures do not result in death. In 2007, only 46 children younger than 12 years of age died from poisoning in the United States. Unfortunately, almost all of these deaths could have been prevented. Please ask your Esse Health Pediatrician how you can prevent your child from being poisoned. He or she would be happy to help you make your home safe to keep your child as healthy as possible.

Sources:

- ["Prevention of Poisoning in Children," Up to Date online medical reference.](#)
- TIPP—The Injury Prevention Program (Copyright © 1994 American Academy of Pediatrics)
- PoisonPrevention.org
www.essehealth.com