

## Poison Prevention - Keep Your Children Safe

By: Nancy Quigley, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner  
Esse Health Creve Coeur Pediatrics

Children act fast and so do poisons. Accidental poisoning in children can happen in a flash. Say you are having a bad morning so you take a couple of Tylenol for your headache, putting the childproof cap back on the bottle and leaving it on the kitchen counter. Your very clever toddler pushes the kitchen chair over to the counter, climbs on the counter, shakes the bottle, happy at the noise it makes, manages to get the cap off and decides to taste the bright red pills. All in a matter of minutes. You turn and find him with red and white debris in his mouth and the pills spilled over the counter. A bad day is suddenly worse.

Every day, close to 400 children are treated for unintentional poisoning and two of those children actually die. Any room in your house may contain poisons; even Grandma's purse can be a risk. The very best approach, of course, is prevention; poison proof your home. Lock poison up and don't keep it if you don't need it. Know the poison control phone number and program it into your cell phone (1-800-222-1222).

Poisoning is more likely to happen when there are changes in routine: visits to grandparents, holiday gatherings, overnight guests in the house who may leave medication within reach in the guest bathroom, a party where glasses with just a little leftover alcohol remain out overnight—for an early morning tasting by a curious toddler. Stop, look around and take extra care during stressful times.

Call medicine by its correct name; don't call it candy. In general, don't take medicine in front of a young child as children tend to copy adult behavior.

The list of potential poisons is long: medications, especially pain medicines, are most common, as well as cleaning products, antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid, pesticides, furniture polish, gasoline and kerosene and lamp oil, dishwasher detergent, mothballs and paint thinner. Remember to keep all these items in original containers, never in food or drink containers. While you're using one of these products, hang onto it and do not put it down.



Carefully dispose of those little silica gel packages that remove moisture in packaging. Energy drinks contain enough caffeine to harm a young child. As anyone with a baby knows, little children will put anything in their mouths. This is part of how they learn. Suspect poisoning if you notice these signs in your child: burns on his or her lips or mouth, unusual drooling or odd odors on his or her breath, and sudden behavior changes (e.g. unusual sleepiness, jumpiness).

Other causes of poisoning are carbon monoxide and lead. Never leave your car running in the garage, even with the garage door open. Use carbon monoxide detectors, especially near a furnace or wood stove. Don't use grills indoors and don't heat your kitchen with a gas oven.

Lead poisoning is insidious, happening slowly but causing permanent damage to our bodies. Sources of lead are old paint (manufactured before 1978) in the form of chips or dust and dirt, inside and outside the house; hobby metals used in stained glass; fishing weights; and mini blinds made before 1997 and manufactured outside the United States. New blinds labeled "new formulation" or "non-leaded" are safe. Some ceramic cookware contains lead, which is released when cooking acidic foods.

## TREATMENT

- Swallowed poisons: If you suspect your child has ingested a poisonous substance, first get the item away from the child and remove any obvious particles from the mouth. Do not make the child vomit. Syrup of Ipecac is no longer recommended and should not be in your medicine cabinet. If the child is unconscious or not breathing or having convulsions, call 911. If your child does not have these symptoms, call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 with the item in hand.
- Irritants to the eye: Strong irritants to the eye should be flushed immediately with room temperature water, even if the child protests. Rinse for at least 15 minutes, while holding the eye open.
- Skin exposure to toxin: remove the child's clothes and rinse the skin with room temperature water for 15 minutes.
- Poisonous fumes: take your child outside to breathe fresh air right away.

Always call the Poison Control Center for help. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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*Nancy Quigley is a Certified Pediatric Nurse  
Practitioner at the Esse Health Creve Coeur  
Pediatrics Office  
11630 Studt Ave., Suite 200  
Creve Coeur, MO 63141  
Phone: (314) 567-7337*