

Family Living

Focus

by

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Extension Agent

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"Poisons: Kids and You"

Spend a few hours, not even a day, following a young child on his investigations around your home. Accidental poisoning can happen in the early morning when the active toddler starts crawling out of the crib/bed before sleeping parents realize that the child is exploring.

National Poison Prevention Week is March 19-25. But you can make every week poison prevention week. Everyone should do their part to stop children being accidentally poisoned.

Each year, approximately one million children under the age of six accidentally poison themselves. About one-half of these are two and three-year-olds. Nearly 90% of these children "wolf" down poisons while under an adult's supervision. Young children find a poison usually during mealtime hours when they are hungry or tired. Small children will swallow almost anything they

can get into their mouths. A child's curiosity is all it takes for a possible accident to happen.

When a young child is hungry or thirsty, anything within reach is appealing, even a red oil or colorful liquid that looks like something a child has had before. Little people can not read. Poisons act fast and so do children. More poisonings occur between 9-10 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.

What is poison? It is anything you touch, taste, smell, drink, spray or spill that can make you sick. It is a product that is not used as it is intended or designed. Poisons can come in attractive containers. They may be colorful. They can also smell sweet and appealing.

Poisons come in four forms — solid, liquid, spray and invisible. Solids can be held in your hand, like detergent, medications, plants, etc. Liquid types include polishes, deodorants, shampoos, cleaners, alcoholic beverages,

rubbing alcohol, bleach, etc. They are quickly swallowed and easily absorbed.

Spray poisons are the aerosol and pump type like window cleaners, perfumes, hair sprays, even paints. A child will often mimic an adult using this item. A young child doesn't realize the danger of spraying this product into the face or eyes. The invisible poisons include fumes from vehicle exhausts, charcoal grills, and even cigarette smoke. The poisonous substances enter through the nose and lungs.

Read the label. Protect yourself and your children. A product's label has a lot of useful information. It includes instructions for use as well as possible precautions.

Many household cleaning products are not dangerous if used properly and stored out of reach of inquisitive hands. Precautionary statements are not needed if exposure to small amounts or swallowing small amount would not cause major harm. Some of these products include fabric softeners or handwashing detergents.

Words that alert you to the fact that a given product needs to be used in a certain way include the words: Caution/Warning as a mild warning. Danger indicates a greater precaution needs to be taken with this product. Poison is not classified as a signal word but it is the strongest indicator of a hazard. It is rarely used on household pro-

ducts but rather on items such as household lye, anti-freeze and insecticides.

Don't mix household chemicals. Keep products in original containers with product labels intact. Instructions, precautionary statements and first-aid instructions may vary according to product ingredients. Labels are for the consumer's benefit. Read and follow labels.

Medications - More than 40% reported poisoning exposures involve some form of medications.

Don't call medicine "candy." Aspirin is the most common type of accidental poison. It is found in every home — in the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen, and even the living room. Keep it out of sight even if it has a safety cap.

Check the label when giving medication and turn the light on at night. Store medicine separately from other products. Discard old medication by flushing down the toilet or drain. Rinse container and discard.

If A Poisoning Has Occurred: Do you have the number of your

local Poison Control Center readily available? If not, look it up and place near your phone with your other emergency phone numbers.

Should a poison occur, remain calm. Have the following information when you call the poison information center, doctor, or 911 about the person and the poison: the person's age and weight, what poison was involved and if possible, the product label. How was the person poisoned? Swallowed, inhaled, splashed on the skin or in the eyes? Has the person vomited? Was first aid, if any, given?

Know about Syrup of Ipecac. This is a non-prescription medicine which induces vomiting when given by mouth. Keep this in your first aid kit for the home. Use it under the directions of a trained medical professional.

Poison-Proof Your Home. You need to educate yourself and your child about poison prevention. When it comes to poison prevention, you are your child's best teacher. Poison prevention is for everyone.

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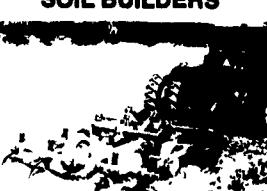
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