

# Poison Prevention

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We all know that poisons are substances that are harmful to the body. They can enter our bodies through our mouths if we eat or drink them, through our lungs if we breathe them in, or through our skin if we touch them.

People of any age can be hurt by poisons, but children are especially vulnerable. Children are curious and are great explorers. If something is in their reach, they may try to learn about it by opening it, smelling it, or even tasting it. Because of this, it is important to make sure to keep poisons where children will not be able to reach them.

But what should we be on the lookout for when it comes to protecting youngsters?

Everyday items can become poisons when used incorrectly. Cleaning products such as furniture polish, drain cleaner, dish washing detergent and all purpose cleaners can be toxic. Outdoor items such as pesticides, anti freeze, and windshield wiper fluids can also be dangerous. Be sure that these items are stored in a locked cabinet or container where children cannot see them or reach them.

When using cleaning products inside, open a window or turn on a fan to prevent fumes from building up. Don't mix cleaning products as some of them, such as bleach and ammonia, can form toxic gases when mixed. Keep products in their original containers so you know what they are.

Medications can help us feel better, but they can also make us sick. Keep medications locked up where children cannot see them or reach them. Don't take medication in front of children as they may try to imitate you later. Never tell children medication is candy as that makes it all the more attractive to them. Make sure that you read the label on any medication and be sure you are using the right dose. Remember that no container is really "child proof," so it is important to keep medication and other potential poisons out of the reach of children.

Plants can also be poisonous, even some plants that are commonly found in houses, gardens, and parks. Be sure to check if plants are poisonous before putting them in your house or garden and teach children not to taste berries or other parts of plants unless a trusted adult has told them it is safe.

If you are worried that your child or someone else may have ingested, or been in contact with a poison, contact the California Poison Control System (CPCS) at 1-800-222-1222. Keep this number posted by phones and programmed into your cell phone for quick access in an emergency. The California Poison Control System will be able to advise on what symptoms to look for and what to do if those symptoms appear. Syrup of ipecac is no longer recommended to treat poisonings. If the person has collapsed, is unconscious, or isn't breathing, call 911 right away.

Poisonings are scary, but they are also preventable. As you safety-check your house to make sure it is safe for children, remember to get down on their level and think about what they can see and reach. By keeping poisons out of their reach, we can help keep children safe.

## *Resources and references*

American Association of Poison Control Centers at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at

[www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning/index.html)

California Poison Control System at <http://www.calpoison.org/>

*(This article is not meant to be a substitute for medical advice or care. Please seek medical care from your own health care provider.)*