

# Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire and Life Safety Tips

April 2009



## POISONING PREVENTION

Children cannot and should not be expected to just “know better” when it comes to avoiding accidental poisoning. It is up to the adults in their lives to take the steps necessary to keep this tragedy from happening.

Just because they put cartoon characters on the label doesn't mean vitamin pills are not medicine. Those containing iron can be particularly dangerous if taken in large dosages. Every year, more than 72,600 children ages 5 and under visit the emergency room for unintentional poisoning.

According to the Association of Poison Control Centers, poison centers nationwide receive more than one million calls about poison exposures involving children five years and younger. Among the potentially toxic household products involved with calls to the poison centers were:

- Personal care products, including baby oil and mouthwash containing ethanol;
- Cleaning substances, including drain openers and oven cleaners;
- Hydrocarbons, such as lamp oil and furniture polish;
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications.

Ninety percent of child poisonings happen in a home. They even happen in homes without children – these take place when children visit. It could also take place when people bring medicine into homes where children live. Keep this in mind when you have visitors to your home or visit homes where there are people who may be on medication. Tell grand-parents, other relatives and friends about storing medicine and poisonous household products safely to avoid poisoning when your family visits their homes.

**Candy? Not Candy!**



Children who are poisoned are often attracted to prescription and nonprescription medicines because of their shape, color, and smell. The same can be said about some common household products. It is said that automobile antifreeze has somewhat of a pleasant taste. This may cause the child to ingest an amount greater than they would of something with an unpleasant taste. This could do more damage. In addition, their natural curiosity and desire to put everything in their mouths increases their poisoning risk. Children are at significantly greater risk from poisoning death and exposure than adults because they are smaller, have faster metabolic rates, and are less able to physically handle toxic chemicals.

Cleaning supplies, medications, alcohol, wild mushrooms, and pesticides are just a few of the many poisonous substances that can commonly be found in or around many homes.



Some flowers and plants are also poisonous along with cigarette butts. A child who chews on these may get nicotine poisoning.

Before applying pesticides or household chemicals, remove children, their toys, as well as their pets from the area. Keep them all away until the pesticide has dried or as long as recommended on the label.

Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint. If you plan to remodel or renovate, get your home tested. Don't try to remove the lead paint yourself. Get your child tested for lead. There are no visible symptoms of lead poisoning, and children may suffer behavior or learning problems as a result of exposure to lead hazards.

If you apply insect repellents to your child, read all directions first! Do not apply over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin. Do not apply to eyes, mouth, hands, or directly on the face. Use just enough to cover exposed skin or clothing, but do not use under clothing.

All medicines, other potentially poisonous household products and alcohol should be locked out of children's sight and reach.

- Don't leave medicine in your purse or in an unlocked kitchen or bathroom cabinet.
- Don't put medicine on a kitchen or bedside table.
- Never leave out loose pills.
- Always choose child-resistance packaging. They have prevented hundreds of child deaths.
- Never leave medicines or potentially poisonous household products unattended even for a minute while you are using them. An accidental poisoning can happen in a blink of the eye. A wise person once told me, "Some accidents are

unforgiving. Once it happens, you can't take it back. You may not get the chance to do it better the next time."

Supervise and monitor all contact between your children and medicines.

- Keep medicines and potential poisons in their original packages.
- Don't take medicines in front of kids; they may try to copy you.
- Do not involve children as "helpers" with your medication. They should not remind you to take your medicine or bring you water, for example.
- Don't call medicines or vitamins "candy."
- Tell relatives and friends about storing medicines safely to avoid poisonings when your family visits their homes.

Keep the National Poison Control Center number near every phone.

If you suspect that someone has been poisoned, stay calm and call **911**. Afterwards, take the product to the phone and call the Poison Control Center at:

## Poison Control Hotline 1-800-222-1222

- Follow the operator's instructions. Do not make the child vomit or give the child anything unless directed by the poison control center or a doctor.
- Keep activated charcoal on hand, to be used only on the advice of the poison control center or a doctor. Ipecac syrup should not longer be used at home.

I THINK MY CHILD  
HAS BEEN  
POISONED, HOW  
CAN I TELL AND  
WHAT SHOULD I  
DO?



Your child may vomit or become drowsy. You may find some of the substance around the child's mouth or stuck in the teeth. There may be burns on the child's lips or mouth, or you may be able to smell the product on their breath. Sometimes there are no symptoms right away.

## **SOURCE MATERIAL**

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Safe Kids Worldwide

The Risk Watch Program of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC)