

More than 90% of poison exposures occur in the home and involve a variety of products including cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning substances, pain relievers and other over the counter medications, foreign bodies, and plants.

# Help Your Child Avoid a Fatal Mistake

Written by Board Certified Pediatrician  
Dawn Larson, MD



In 2008 unintentional poisoning became the number one cause of injury death in the United States for the first time since 1980, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In the past 30 years, the rate of accidental poisonings has

tripled. Approximately 190,000 children received care in the emergency rooms for unintentional poisonings in 2008 and just over half of these visits were for children under 4 years old. This results in nearly 15,000 unintentional poisoning deaths in the United States every year.

More than 90% of poison exposures occur in the home and involve a variety of products including cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning substances, pain relievers and other over the counter medications, foreign bodies, and plants. For older children and adults the most common unintentional poisoning exposures are from pain relievers, sedatives, cleaning substances, antidepressants, and bites or stings. A nationwide toll free number for poison control centers is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The operators have the most updated and broad based information for treatment of poisonings. The number, 1-800-222-1222, should be prominently posted for quick reference.

The medications most likely to result in death from poisoning are iron,

antidepressants, cardiovascular drugs, pain relievers, and antiseizure medications. Cleaning products, antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, pesticides, furniture polish, gasoline, kerosene and lamp oil are also highly toxic substances. It is important to remember that fumes can also lead to poisoning. Carbon monoxide results in more fatal unintentional poisonings in the United States than any other agent.

Past treatments for swallowed poisons would routinely include the recommendation to administer syrup of ipecac. This is no longer recommended. Inducing vomiting can result in more toxic damage to the esophagus and mouth as well as aspiration of the contents into the lungs. Current treatment recommends calling the poison control number above immediately to receive instructions. If the child is unconscious, not breathing, having difficulty breathing or having seizures, call 911. If the poison is on the skin or in the eye, flush the area or eye with water for 15 minutes and then call the poison control center. Fumes such as from a car running in a closed garage, leaky gas vents, gas or propane stoves



# Help Your Child Avoid a Fatal Mistake

Written by Board Certified Pediatrician  
Dawn Larson, MD



or heaters can be poisonous and deadly. If there has been a possible exposure remove the victim to an area with fresh air and good ventilation immediately. As previously noted, if the child is impaired call 911 otherwise poison control can be contacted to advise on treatment and follow up.

**Other safety tips include:**

- Store all medicines, household products and personal care items in the original

containers with labels and read the labels before use.

- Store these items in locked cabinets out of reach of small children.
- Be aware of medications that visitors may bring to your home or that may be available when you visit other homes.
- Do not call medicine candy.
- Avoid taking medication in front of young children as they tend to imitate adults.
- Keep your work areas well ventilated when using chemical products.
- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.

Remember, constant vigilance and proper safety precautions as well as quick action by calling 1-800-222-1222 is vital to saving lives when a poison is involved.

***For more information or to schedule an appointment please call 605-665-5538.***