

HEALTH ALERT

*Office of Developmental Programs
Office of the Medical Director*

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POISON PREVENTION AND TOXIC HOUSEHOLD SUBSTANCES

What is a poison?

A poison is something that can make you sick or kill you if you eat, touch or breathe it in. Even some helpful products can be dangerous if used in the wrong way. Common household items that can harm people are cleaning products (like floor or drain cleaners), personal hygiene items (like mouthwash or bath products), car fluids, gardening chemicals, rubbing alcohol, and even medications. Some house plants may also be toxic.

When do poisonings occur?

Most poisonings (more than 70%) occur when the product is being used. For example, things like floor cleaning products are more likely to be drunk during the time that the floor is being cleaned than they are when locked or sitting in a cabinet.

Who is at risk for ingesting poisons?

Anyone that doesn't understand the difference between something that you can and cannot eat is at risk for drinking or eating a poison. In addition there are individuals that may compulsively drink or eat anything that they come across. They are also at risk for poisoning.

How do I protect people from accidentally drinking or eating a potentially toxic product?

Part of each person's Individual Support Plan (ISP) should be to identify whether or not they know the difference between something that is edible and something that is not. If they are unable to do this, then all toxic products should be kept locked. The following tips may be helpful to prevent poisonings with household products.

Poison Prevention Tips

Store poisons safely:

- Lock up medications and household products.
- Keep poisons in their original container.
- Use C-R packaging like special safety caps that make it difficult to get into the packages.
- Label packages with poison stickers and teach people what those mean.
- Assure that poisons in locations like cars, garages, basements, or sheds are locked.

Use poisons safely:

- Follow the directions on the label.
- Take the product with you if you have to answer the phone or the door.
- Put the cap back on the product when you are using it, making it more difficult to get into it while in use.
- Lock poisons up immediately after using them.
- Teach people to ask before consuming things as poisons often look like food or drink.

What do I do if someone drinks a household product like one of those listed above?

Call the Poison Control Center (phone number 1-800-222-1222). Be sure to give them as much detail as you can about what happened (including an estimate of the amount that someone drank and specifically what you have done). Do not give salt, lemon juice, milk, ipecac, or any other substance unless directed by a doctor or poison control.

References:

American Association of Poison Control Centers

<http://www.aapcc.org/dnn/PoisoningPrevention.aspx>