

# Poisoning

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## How to Protect Your Child

Babies and children explore the world with their mouths. They put things into their mouths even if they don't taste good. Children ages 1–3 have the biggest chance of accidental poisoning, usually by swallowing something poisonous.

The average household contains 250 products that could be poisonous, including medications, vitamins (especially those with iron), cleaners, cosmetics, insect or rat poisons, alcoholic beverages and houseplants. Our children need our help to keep them safe!

### What can I do?

- Post your local **Poison Help Line** by the phone. The Help Line number is usually found in the emergency phone numbers at the beginning of your local phone book.
- Call the Poison Help Line first if you know or think that your child has swallowed something harmful.
- Take your child and the 'poison' to the phone with you. If you are told to take your child to the hospital emergency room, take the 'poison' with you, too.
- Ipecac (an over-the-counter medication which causes vomiting) is no longer recommended as a treatment for poisoning. It may cause more harm than good and should not be in your medicine cabinet.

### How can I keep my child safe?

- Store all potentially harmful items out of reach (and out of sight) of children. Store products in their original containers which usually list toxic ingredients and give advice about ingestion.
- Most poisonings occur when a product is in use. Never leave a child alone with any product or medicine "even for a second". When going to answer the phone or a knock at the door, take any medicines or cleaning products with you.
- Use safety latches/locks on drawers and cabinets which contain dangerous items, and replace safety caps on bottles immediately after use. Be aware, however, that there is no such thing as a *child-proof* container. Child-resistant containers only *slow* children from getting a cap off, and many children can open them quickly!
- Watch children carefully at adult gatherings where your attention may be diverted. Glasses containing alcoholic beverages and ashtrays with cigarette butts should be out of reach.
- Try to be extra alert when household routines are disrupted, or during times of stress, as this is a common time for poisonings to occur.
- Never tell a child that medicine is candy.
- Do not buy vitamins with iron unless advised by a doctor. If you have these at home, store wisely...a few can be very harmful!
- Flush old medication (or dispose at your pharmacy) and get rid of other old toxic items.
- Never put hazardous products in other containers. (People often use soft-drink bottles or milk cartons to store leftover paint thinner, turpentine, or windshield washer fluid. This is a bad idea because children (and adults) associate these bottles with food and drink.)
- Rinse containers that have contained toxic substances, before discarding.
- Know the names of household plants and keep them out of reach.
- Teach older children about product safety symbols.

While most poisonings occur at home, many also occur in the homes of friends or family. Tell grandparents and other people your child may visit, how to make their homes safe!

#### Adapted from

"You can prevent poisoning," a "Keep your kids safe" Fact sheet from Safe Kids Canada <[www.safekidscanada.ca](http://www.safekidscanada.ca)> , Safe Start <[www.cw.bc.ca](http://www.cw.bc.ca)>, and the Canadian Institute of Child Health <[www.cich.ca](http://www.cich.ca)> and "Poison prevention" <[www.sickkids.ca/poisoninformationcentre/](http://www.sickkids.ca/poisoninformationcentre/)>

