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Poison Centers Ready to Handle Your Medicine Mistakes

One of the common misconceptions surrounding poison centers is that they are aimed primarily at children who've gotten into something they shouldn't have. While poison centers do take such calls, they also take plenty of calls from people who've made mistakes when taking their medicine. In 2008, 10.6 percent of all poison exposures occurred as a result of "therapeutic errors," including taking the wrong medicine or inadvertently taking doses too close together.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network offers the following tips aimed at taking medicine safely:

- Never take medicine that isn't intended for you, and never give a person medicine not intended for them. Do not use another person's prescription, even if it is similar to one you may be taking.
- Do not give a child medicine or vitamins intended for adults.
- Never use a household spoon to measure liquids because the volume in such a spoon could vary widely and the dose would not be accurate.
- Make sure after refilling a prescription that the pills look the same as the previous month, and that there is a child-resistant closure on the bottle. If the directions are not clear or appear to have changed, ask the pharmacist or your doctor as soon as you notice it. If side effects occur when taking medicine, call your doctor or pharmacist to check and see if you should stop the drug.
- Some drugs include warnings that they should not be taken with certain drugs, supplements, foods or alcohol. Be sure you know if this applies to your medicines.

- Never take medicine in the dark, and use glasses or a magnifier to read the label if necessary before taking each dose. Some poison exposures occur when people accidentally take medicine intended for their pets, or used ear drops in their eyes, or inhaled a spray product intended for the nose.



- Store all medicines out of the sight of teens and others who may try to take them out of curiosity or for abuse purposes. If there are strong pain killers or other potent drugs in the home, consider locking them up separately from other medicines.

- Maintain an up-to-date list of all medicines for each family member, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, as well as supplements. Show the list to your doctor at clinic visits, and verify each time you go to the pharmacy for refills or buy a new medicine. Be sure you have any allergies listed as well. Having this information when you travel is also very important.
- When using medicine administered by a "patch," take off one patch before applying the next one. In the case of topical products, wash off the skin before applying more.
- Don't flush old medicines down the toilet; however, there are exceptions to include narcotic pain relievers. To dispose of old medicines, hold them for a local medication disposal event, or mix them with an inedible substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter, then dispose of them in a sealed bag or other container in the trash. Call your local pharmacy to determine if they have tips on proper disposal as well, or log on to www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou.

If you are worried or have a question about how to take medicine safely, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

Keeping your Garden Poison-Free

The frost is gone, the flowers are blooming and in many parts of the country, it's time to put away the snow shovel and dust off the gardening shovel instead.

With the ushering in of the beautiful weather, we set our sights on spring gardening.

But even this relaxing hobby has its dangers. The Florida Poison Information Center Network offers the following tips to keep gardeners out in the yard rather than in the emergency room during spring planting season:

- Be cautious when spraying pesticides and other chemicals. Many are toxic if ingested, and even prolonged skin contact or inhalation during use of product can cause toxic symptoms. Symptoms of pesticide poisoning may include irritation of the skin, eyes and lungs, as well as muscle cramps, vomiting, diarrhea and sweating. If you experience these symptoms, call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222 for assistance.
- Pay attention to what you're putting in your garden. Weeds such as nightshade and nettles often co-exist with planted flowers and shrubs, and can be harmful. Signs of plant poisoning include symptoms ranging from skin irritation to nausea to hallucinations. Some plants when ingested can be toxic to the heart, liver, kidney, stomach and can cause seizures.
- While products may note that they are "green,"

"natural" or "organic," these are terms that are used interchangeably and don't necessarily mean the products are harmless. Regardless of the product, make sure you carefully read the label information before using it.

- Keep pesticides, fertilizers and other gardening chemicals in their original containers, and out of the sight and reach of children.
- Do not apply pesticides on a windy day or in children's sand boxes.
- Wash hands after contact with any chemical.
- Store seeds, bulbs and plant food out of the reach of children; some seeds and bulbs can be coated with insecticides.
- Consider all mushrooms found outside unsafe.



Call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately if you suspect a child has touched, breathed or swallowed pesticide, fertilizer or parts of a plant.

Tips for Safe Housecleaning

Now that the weather's nicer, it's much easier to open the windows, let the sun shine in and get rid of the dirt that built up over a long, dismal winter.

It's time to sweep up the dust from the prior year, pack away those fuzzy sweaters and sort through cluttered closets and drawers.

Believe it or not, this routine is not without dangers. According to American Association of Poison Control Center data, about 90 percent of poison exposures occur at home, and more than 50 percent of those exposures affect children under the age of five.

Household cleaning products are consistently among the top five products that spur calls to poison centers regarding children five or under. In 2008, only analgesics, or painkillers, and cosmetic products spurred more calls to poison centers regarding children five or under.



Household products accounted for nearly 10 percent of all poison exposures in this age group.

Adults need to be careful as well. In 2008, household cleaning products accounted for eight percent of the calls to poison centers regarding people 20 or older.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network offers the following tips for spring cleaning safely:

- Do not leave children unattended near a cleaning product.
- Keep all cleaning products locked away and out of reach of young children.
- Never mix cleaning products. Doing so may create toxic fumes. Use only one cleaning product at a time.

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A Few Tips on Avoiding a Toxic Workplace

While the vast majority of poison exposures occur in the home, the workplace, despite its sometimes bland and sterile environment, has its own risks.

It's easy to take for granted dangers in the office, particularly when focused on getting a job done. But in 2008, 1.75 percent of all poison exposures reported to poison centers occurred in the workplace – putting workplaces a distant second to homes as sites where poison exposures occurred.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network wants to reduce poisonings in every setting, including the office. It offers the following tips aimed at keeping the office poison-free:

- Be careful when handling laser printer cartridges. A poison exposure can occur when laser printer cartridge ink is spilt. Fumes, dust or ozone from the cartridges can be dangerous if inhaled.
- Beware the lunchroom, and particularly the office refrigerator. Foods stored in the company break or lunch room refrigerator can be outdated, leaving the potential for food poisoning.
- Office supplies such as keyboard cleaners, markers, glues or white-out help to get the job done, but can be

misused if inhaled. Make sure these key office supplies are used for their intended purpose.

- Don't treat workplace cleaning supplies casually. Mixing or handling such products improperly can cause irritation to the skin or breathing difficulties.
- The same dangers present in the household are also a danger in the workplace. Read labels and use caution when taking over-the-counter or prescription medications, particularly if handling potentially dangerous equipment or instruments on the job.
- Utilize integrated pest management (IPM) techniques to keep bugs out of the workplace. Caulk openings and cracks. Repair damaged window screens. Clean the area of dirty dishes and garbage.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network joins the nation's 60 poison control centers in their efforts to prevent poisoning. Poison centers offer free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you believe you've been exposed to a poison or have questions about whether a substance is poisonous, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

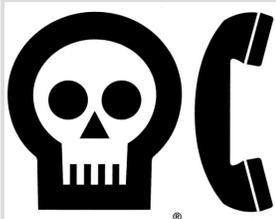
Safe Housecleaning

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- Store cleaning products in their original containers and not in empty food containers or bottles.
- Always read the label instructions to determine how to safely use the product.
- Keep the toll-free national poison emergency phone number 1-800-222-1222 near your phone in case of an accidental exposure.
- Call the poison center immediately if you suspect a child has touched, breathed or swallowed a cleaning

product. Calls to 1-800-222-1222 are automatically connected to a specialist in poison information who is a nurse, pharmacist or doctor offering free, expert, confidential advice. The specialist in poison information will tell you exactly what to do and will follow up with you by phone, if necessary, to provide further assurance.

If you believe you've been exposed to a poison or have questions about whether a substance is poisonous, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.



This newsletter is brought to you by the Florida Poison Information Center Network and was produced with assistance from the American Association of Poison Control Centers and local poison centers around the country.

When you dial 1-800-222-1222, your call is answered by a medical professional with special training in poisoning management. Help is fast, free, confidential, and available 24-hours a day, every day.

Summer is Approaching; Be Poison Safe

School will soon be out and families will be on the move making plans for summer! Whether traveling, hosting guests in your home, or just enjoying the weather outdoors, children are at greater risk of accidental poisoning during the summer months.

During last year's summer months, June – August, there were over 30,000 poisoning emergency calls placed to the poison centers in the state of Florida. Although we commonly see calls concerning sedative/hypnotic drugs, cardiovascular drugs, cosmetics, topical preparations and foreign body ingestions, pesticides, insecticides, plant ingestions and insect bites/stings seem to always peak this time of year. Of the total number of poison emergency calls, approximately 14,000 calls statewide were for children age six and under.

It is difficult to maintain a poison-proof environment during the summer season, but a few simple tips can help reduce the chance of accidental poisoning emergencies, especially in children. The Florida Poison Information Center Network offers the following tips to help keep you safe during the summer. For poisoning emergencies, call the Poison Center emergency number at 1-800-222-1222.

When using insect repellents, always follow the directions carefully as some repellents are not meant to be applied to the skin. However, when applying appropriate insect repellents apply only to exposed skin. When applying to the face, spray on the hands and rub onto face, being careful to avoid the eyes and mouth. DO NOT spray on children's hands as they tend to rub their eyes and/or place their hands or fingers in their mouths. Wash all sprayed areas with soap and water when finished playing outdoors, as the repellent is no longer necessary. Repeated applications may be dangerous; wash with soap and water before reapplying repellent.

IMMEDIATELY call the Poison Control Center if you believe you have been bitten or stung by any of the following: snakes, spiders, fire ants, jellyfish, or Portuguese man-o-war.

Many chemicals used to control insects, rodents and weeds are also toxic. When ingested or inhaled, even in very small

The Florida Poison Information Center Network serves Florida's residents and health care professionals and is accredited as Regional Poison Control Centers by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. The Florida Poison Information Center Network is a cooperative effort between the three poison centers and their affiliated medical and academic institutions, including Shands Jacksonville Medical Center, University of Florida College of Medicine; Jackson Memorial Hospital, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; and Tampa General Hospital. The Poison Center Network is primarily funded by a grant from Children's Medical Services, Florida Department of Health.

amounts, most are capable of producing illness. Avoid using products that require leaving powder or pellets in areas where children and pets may have access to them.

For pool chemicals safety, read and follow the labels and directions carefully before you use the product; these products should only be opened and used outdoors. Do not store pool chemicals where other flammable items may mix with them; i.e., a mixture of pool chemicals and fertilizer can cause a fire or explosion. Never use metallic utensils to dispense pool chemicals; instead use clean and dry plastic, glass, china or enamelware utensils and buckets.

Use caution when petroleum-based products, such as gasoline, kerosene, motor oils, paint thinner, furniture polish or mineral spirits, are used. If ingested, the chemical can get into the lungs to cause coughing, difficulty in breathing, and lung damage. If ingested, call the Poison Control Center immediately. DO NOT induce vomiting.

Children are fascinated with mushrooms. A mushroom cannot usually be judged safe by sight, by the area in which it grows, or by witnessing animals eating it. Many species of mushrooms are capable of causing illness, poisoning or death. ALL wild mushrooms ingested should be considered potentially dangerous.

To avoid food poisoning, wash all counter tops, utensils and hands with warm, soapy water prior to and after food preparation, and thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator. Avoid leaving perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours.

When traveling, store medications, personal items, insect repellent or sunscreen, in suitcases locked in the vehicle's trunk away from children in the back seat. Avoid bringing along "a few pills" in unmarked containers; these are not child-resistant and they are unlabeled as to content or quantity. For visitors who are not used to the activity of children, remind them to properly store all personal belongings, especially prescription items, out of the reach and sight of children.

If camping, be careful of the underbrush, as it could contain poison ivy. Remember, "Leaves of three, let it be." If someone touches poison ivy, immediately rinse with plenty of running water for at least five minutes and call the Poison Control Center emergency number at 1-800-222-1222 for more treatment information.

For summer poisoning emergencies or for poisoning related questions, call the Poison Control emergency hotline toll free 24 hours a day, at 1-800-222-1222, and a Specialist in Poison Information will immediately respond.



florida's poison centers
Children's Medical Services