

Making Your Home a Poison-Safe Zone

When you think of poisons, the first things that come to mind may be hemlock, antifreeze and pesticides. But there are many more products lurking in your bathroom cabinet, hiding under your kitchen sink or lying in wait on your garage shelf that can cause harm if used improperly, by the wrong person or in the incorrect amount.

Poisons can be inhaled, swallowed or enter the body through the eyes, ears or skin. They range from seemingly innocuous items such as diaper rash ointment and perfume, to corrosive oven cleaners and gasoline. The key to keeping you and your family safe while surrounded by products and substances that can potentially cause harm starts with reading labels.

Reading the label tells you how to use the product safely and effectively, as well as how to store it properly. Labels also may have first aid instructions and phone numbers to call for help or additional information. Other ways to make your home a poison-safe zone include:

- Leaving products in original containers and never transferring substances to food or beverage containers.
- Keeping all harmful household cleaners, medications, paints or pesticides in cabinets or drawers that have either a lock or safety latch.
- Not mixing household products together.
- Buying products that have child-resistant packaging.
- Not referring to medicines or vitamins as “candy” or other names that appeal to children.
- Storing food and cleaners in separate cabinets or rooms.
- Wearing protective clothing, such as gloves, long sleeves or shoes, when spraying pesticides or other chemicals.
- Buying only what is necessary and properly disposing of unused product.
- Never pouring substances down a storm drain or where it could run into water supplies and contaminate drinking water.
- Opening the window and turning on a fan when using harmful products inside.
- Placing carbon monoxide detectors in the home.

The most common poisons for children include cosmetics, cleaning products such as laundry detergent or floor cleaners, personal care products such as deodorant and soap, pain medications, and topical preparations, including calamine lotion or diaper rash ointment. For adults, potentially hazardous items include sedatives, antidepressants, cardiovascular drugs, alcohols and household cleaners. Pets also may



be susceptible to poisoning through coffee grounds, chocolate, grapes, onions, toothpaste, medicines, mothballs and certain plants, including sago palms and azaleas.

According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, more than one million children under the age of five are exposed to potential poisons each year and one million adults are involved in potential poisoning situations. If a poisoning does occur, call 9-1-1 if the person has collapsed, is having seizures or convulsions, or not breathing. If alert and awake, have them spit out any remaining poison. Do not induce vomiting or use syrup of ipecac. If poison has come in contact with the skin, remove clothing and rinse with lukewarm water. Flush poison in the eye with room temperature water. Go outside immediately if poisonous fumes are inhaled.

For more information about poisons or poison prevention, call the National Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222.