

Oregon Poison Center

1-800-222-1222

BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

This outline has been compiled to give you background information on the Oregon Poison Center and to aid in teaching poison prevention. We hope the information will be helpful as you prepare your activities.

FIRST, SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE OREGON POISON CENTER

- The Oregon Poison Center opened on January 2, 1978.
- It is open 24 hours a day each day of the year.
- The Poison Center received 70,000 calls last year - that is 191 calls per day!
- The NEW national number for all poison control centers is 1-800-222-1222.
- Nurses trained in toxicology staff the Poison Center.
- 80% of all calls to the Poison Center can be handled at home.
- The Poison Center is funded by the Oregon Health and Sciences University, the State of Oregon, and by donations.

WHAT IS A POISON?

A poison is something that can be harmful if swallowed, spilled on the skin, splashed in the eyes, or inhaled. Children are frequently confused about what a poison is. They may know that poisons are bad, but do not realize that something sweet smelling or tasting can be poison too.

FACTS ABOUT POISONINGS

- More than 1,000,000 children are poisoned every year in the United States.
- Children under the age of six are most often the victims of poisoning.
- One estimate suggests that there are 250,000 household products on the market that can poison a child.
- Many accidental poisonings occur when children are hungry or stressed or when there is a change in routine such as a holiday, or the arrival of visitors.
- Prescription medicine accidentally ingested by children often belongs to grandparents.
- Medicine is the number one poisoning agent followed by cleaning products, personal care products and plants.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES IN CHILDREN THAT MAY AFFECT THE INCIDENCE OF POISONINGS

- Five-month-old babies pick up toys or small objects with a clawing motion.
- At about nine months old, a child begins to use forefinger and thumb in a pincer motion to pick up single objects.
- Babies explore with all their senses. That means they may put anything into their mouths.
- Two year olds account for 20% of accidental poisonings. A two year old is not capable of saying no to himself when a parent or other adult is not there.
- Children want to imitate those they love, whether it is using hair spray in the bathroom, or slug bait in the garden.

WHAT ABOUT SYRUP OF IPECAC?

Syrup of Ipecac is no longer recommended as a treatment in the prevention of poisoning. There have been many situations where the use of ipecac for a poisoning made things worse. Please call your regional poison center for all questions about the use of syrup of ipecac.

POISON PREVENTION TIPS

- Medicines can be kept in a locked overnight case or a locked fishing tackle box.
- The cupboard under the kitchen sink should not be used for cleaning items. Store canned goods or pots and pans there, and put cleaning items in a locked cupboard.
- Store poisons away from food items.
- Call your local pharmacist or doctor for methods of disposing of outdated or unnecessary medicines. Flushing them down the toilet don't always work.

SOME TEACHING IDEAS

- Use Mr. Yuk stickers on poisonous products. Teach children that Mr. Yuk means 'no', and if they do not see a Mr. Yuk sticker they need to ask an adult.
- Each time a poisonous item is brought into the house/classroom place a Mr. Yuk sticker on it and talk about it in front of the children. Really draw attention to what you are doing with that poisonous product. One example is to teach them; "This soap is a poison. It needs a Mr. Yuk sticker. Watch me put this container of poison in a locked place so it won't hurt you."
- Use a flannel board and place pictures of poisonous and non-poisonous substances on opposite sides of the board.
- Visit our web site for more teaching ideas at www.oregonpoison.org. You can also find poison prevention ideas and games at our national association web site (American Association of Poison Control Centers) at www.aapcc.org.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

- What is a poison? A poison can hurt a grow-up, children and pets. A poison is a good substance used in a bad way.
- Are there any poisons in your home? In my home I found _____.
- Why should a poison be kept in original containers?
- Stress the correct, or safe use of products, i.e., shampoo is good for hair, not the stomach. Gasoline is good for cars, but it is not good for kids. Plants and flowers are pretty to look at but can be poisonous if eaten.

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