

Autumn Hazards

Fall has arrived in the Pacific Northwest. The Oregon Poison Center would like to alert you to some potential hazards associated with these months. Remember, prevention is the best antidote for poisonings!

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas because it is colorless and odorless. Victims may be unaware of its effects until the fumes overcome them. Cars with faulty mufflers may leak carbon monoxide. This can be especially dangerous in the cool weather when cars are operating with windows closed. Passengers in the back seat, usually children, most often are affected first. Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache and nausea. If these symptoms occur, get out of the car immediately and into fresh air. More severe symptoms include sleepiness and vomiting. If these occur, take the victim to an Emergency Department. Carbon monoxide poisoning can also occur in the following situations: improperly functioning home heating systems with furnaces, woodstoves used in poorly ventilated rooms, or burning charcoal indoors.

Antifreeze

Antifreeze products can contain up to 95% ethylene glycol. If swallowed, small amounts of this chemical can cause severe illness and large amounts can lead to death. Windshield washing fluid may contain methanol as well as antifreeze. This chemical can produce blindness if ingested. Antifreeze is marketed in attractive containers, has a sweet taste and a pretty color. Be sure to store these containers in locked cabinets. Never place antifreeze in an old food container for storage. Rinse empty containers thoroughly and recap before discarding. If you suspect that someone (including pets) has ingested antifreeze, give the poison victim 1 – 2 glasses of milk or water and call the Poison Center immediately.

Plants and Berries

Both indoor and outdoor plants may be poisonous. It is helpful to know the names of your houseplants and the plants and bushes in your yard. Your local nurseries may be able to assist you in identifying them. If a child does eat a berry, an outdoor mushroom, or part of a plant, give fluids and call the Poison Center. We will ask you to identify the plant before we can make appropriate treatment recommendations.

Pesticides

Pesticides can be extremely toxic when used improperly. Safety measures must be followed in the storage, application and disposal of pesticides and their containers.

Storage: Always store pesticides in their original container with a complete label. Keep in a locked cabinet. Never store in empty food containers that may be mistaken for food.

Application: READ THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPER USAGE. Remove jewelry and leather clothing before using pesticides. These items cannot be decontaminated adequately. Wear clothing that covers you completely and can be washed after use. Keep children, pets, food and eating utensils away from areas where pesticides have been sprayed for a minimum of 24 hours.

Disposal: Wrap containers in several sheets of newspaper, secure tightly and place in covered trash receptacle.

Salt

This is used on driveways sidewalks and porches for traction and de-icing. This can be poisonous to young children who may ingest toxic amounts. Like any other poison, it should be stored out of the reach of children.

Holidays

The children are home from school, relatives are visiting and the daily household routines become disrupted. Greater parental supervision may be required during these times to prevent accidental poisonings. You may want to take a few minutes to poison-proof your home so that you can have a happy and safe season.

Oregon Poison Center
Oregon Health & Science University
www.oregonpoison.org