



Special points of interest:

Child Passenger Safety Checks — Aug. 10, 14 ,21 & 24
 Child Passenger Safety Seminars — Aug. 5 & 18
 Drowning Prevention Seminars—Aug. 8, 11, 22 & 26

Call 952-4536 for locations & times, or go to: <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu>

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Protecting Your Family From Poisonous Plants and
 Preparing Safe Lunches and Snacks for Kids

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For Safety's Sake

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY FROM POISONOUS PLANTS & CREATURES

When parents think of protecting their children from poisons, they may not necessarily think about plants, insects, or animals. However, many of the plants we have in our landscapes and homes, as well as insects and animals, can cause irritation or have poisonous affects. Knowledge of what plants are in your surrounding is important to keeping your family safe., as is teaching children to be cautious around insects and animals.

To help keep your children safe, take a walk around your yard and home and identify the plants you have. Over 46 common plants have poisonous or irritant effects, including Allamanda, elephant ears, Hydrangea, Oleander, and night blooming jasmine. Once you have identified the plants you have, teach your children which ones they need to avoid, and remind children to never put any part of any plant in their mouths, When purchasing new plants, try to choose those that are non-toxic or that offer a low level of toxicity, If your children play in parks, wooded areas, or at neighbors and friends, you may also want to be aware of the plants that are in those locations.

In addition to plants, you also need to be aware of the many insects and animals that can cause harm through stinging, biting or spitting. Children's natural curiosity with insects and animals is wonderful but can put them in harms way. Stings, bites and other defenses of insects and animals can cause reactions such as itching, blisters, irritation of the eyes and difficulty breathing. Protect your children by teaching them to look at creatures, rather than picking them up and to be aware of some of the more common culprits.

For a list of poisonous plants and creatures and their effects, go to <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu>, click on Forms and Publications and scroll to FS6098FCS—Poisonous Plants and Creatures.

Even though all the necessary precautions are taken, things can still happen and children can still get hurt. If this happens, the following information can help to ease the effects.

Bug bites and stings

Treat bites and stings by scraping away any stinger with your fingernail or a credit card. Avoid using tweezers as they can release more toxin into the skin.

Administer a cough, cold or allergy medication containing an antihistamine if itching is a problem. You can also apply a paste of baking soda and water to the sore area 2 to 3 times a day (use a little ammonia diluted with water for a bee sting). Use Ibuprofen to help reduce swelling.

If there is a severe allergic reaction (difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness) call the doctor immediately. Also call the doctor if pain and swelling lasts more than 72 hours.

For spider bites, if possible, make a positive identification. If the bite is from a recluse or widow and is on the arm or leg, tie a snug bandage above the bite to slow or halt the spread of the venom, apply an ice-filled or damp cloth to the bite, and seek immediate attention.

Snake Bites

If bitten by a venomous snake in the leg or arm, immobilize it and stay as quiet as possible. Apply a loose splint to reduce movement of the affected area, making sure it is loose enough so as not to restrict blood flow, and seek immediate medical attention.

Plant Rash

Treat by applying calamine lotion (avoid formulas that contain antihistamines or anesthetics, since they can make itching worse) several times a day or dab a 1% hydrocortisone cream or a paste of baking soda mixed with water.

If the rash is on the face or a large part of the body, is

infected (blisters, oozes, pus), or is accompanied by a fever, call the doctor. Cortisone injections may be needed to reduce inflammation. An oral antihistamine (Benadryl, Chlortrimeton, etc.) may be recommended to control severe itching.

Plant Ingestion

If a poisonous plant is ingested, call the Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222. Do not give anything by mouth until advised by the Poison Control Center, and do not induce vomiting unless told to do so.

Source: *Summer First-Aid Guide, Parenting*, June/July 2000 and *Spiders—First Aid and Snakes—First Aid*, <http://www.MayoClinic.com>.

PREPARING SAFE LUNCHES AND SNACKS FOR KIDS

The first day of school is right around the corner and with it comes the daily task of providing your child with a safe and nutritious lunch and snack. If your child takes his lunch, you are responsible for making sure that it stays safe until it is eaten. The following tips are offered to keep your child packed lunches safe.

- Before packing your child's lunch, remember to wash your hands with soap and water.
- If you are using a cutting board, remember to wash it after preparing each item and before moving to the next item. Separate boards should be used for fruits and vegetable and for meat and poultry.
- If disposable bags are used to hold food items, discard after use to avoid cross-contamination.
- Pack only the amount of food that will be eaten at a single time.
- If using paper lunch bags, double-bag to help insulate food.
- Be sure to use an ice source when perishable foods are prepared, regardless of type of lunch bag that is used. Frozen juice boxes can be used as an ice source to save space.
- Cooked food should be prepared ahead of time to allow it to chill thoroughly. Keep refrigerated until time to leave. Pack next to ice source.
- Keep hot foods hot by placing in an insulated container. Fill the container with boiling water, let stand a few minutes, empty, then fill with hot food. Keep closed until lunchtime.

In addition to packed lunches, you may need to have snacks available for your child after school that are safe and easy to

prepare. The following tips can help ensure your child's safety when preparing snacks.

- Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water before getting or preparing a snack.
- If using a microwave, teach children to stir or rotate foods half-way through and to cover with a lid or loosely wrapped plastic wrap to help evenly heat food, thereby destroying harmful bacteria. Also teach children to carefully remove the food from the microwave to avoid burns.
- Plastic containers not made for microwave use should never be used in the microwave. Doing so could cause them to warp or melt, possibly causing the release of harmful chemicals into the food.
- Teach children how to use a food thermometer to check for safety. Ready-to-eat foods should reach 165°F or should be steaming before eating.
- Perishable foods, such as pizza, left out of the refrigerator more than two hours should be discarded.
- When possible, avoid the necessity of your child having to use a knife. Keep cut fruits, vegetables and other food items on hand in the refrigerator for quick and easy access.
- Encourage children to only get as much as needed of perishable foods and to put any leftovers in an individual container back into the refrigerator as quickly as possible.



Hand washing is the first step in helping keep children's lunches and snacks safe.

Source: *USDA Gives Tips for Keeping Kids' Food Safe All Day*. Aug. 18, 2006. <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>.

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