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Poison Prevention

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Poisonous substances are all around us... in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in the garage, in our yards, in any room in our homes. Poisons can cause sickness or death when they are ingested, inhaled, or come into contact with the eyes or skin. While anyone can be poisoned, children are most susceptible as poisons often pretty and colorful and come in attractive containers. To a child, a poisonous substance may taste and smell good and may appear to be something good to eat or drink.

Poisons come in four forms: solid, liquid, spray and gas. Solid poison include things such as pills, plants, berries, and batteries. Liquid poisons include things such as floor cleaners, cough syrup, drain cleaners, pesticides, gasoline, mouthwash, etc. Spray poisons include things such as furniture polish, glass cleaners, insecticides, etc. Gas poisons are invisible and can be found anywhere that something is burning and includes such things as carbon monoxide and the gases given off when smoking.

The first defense against accidental poisonings is to store all poisons safely. Poisonous products should be either locked or stored out of the reach and sight and reach of children. Poisonous products should also always be stored in their original containers and should be labeled. Finally, poisonous products, such as medicines, vitamins and household products, should be kept in containers with child resistant caps. In this way, if children do find them they will not be able to get into them.

The next defense against accidental poisonings is to use all poisons safely. This includes reading labels before using poisonous products, keeping poisons with you at all times and returning them to their correct storage area immediately after using them. Other safety measures to take when using poisonous products include never taking or giving medicine in front of children and never calling medicine "candy."

In the event that a poison does occur, it is important to know what steps to take. What you do will depend on the type of poisoning that occurs, but you will always want to call the poison control center at (800) 222-1222. In any poisoning, remain calm. If the patient is unconscious or is having difficulty breathing, call 9-1-1.

If a poison has been swallowed, do not give the victim anything to eat or drink and do not make him/her throw-up or give ipecac syrup until you call the Poison Control Center.

If a poison has been inhaled, get the victim to fresh air right away, then call the Poison Control Center.

If a poison has contacted the skin, remove any contaminated clothing and rinse the victim's skin with water for 10 minutes, then call the Poison Control Center.

If a poison has contacted the eyes, flush the victim's eyes for 15 minutes using lukewarm water held 2-4 inches from the eyes, then call the Poison Control Center.

For more information about poison control, contact our office at (321) 633-1702 or contact the American Association of Poison Control Centers website at www.aapcc.org or the National Poison Prevention Week Council website at poisonprevention.org.