

## Teaching Guidelines

### Why teach poison prevention?

Poisoning is the second leading cause of injury-related-deaths in the US. More than 2 million poisonings are reported to poison centers every year.

Annually, over 1 million children younger than six years of age are poisoned and more than 13,000 need medical attention. These cases account for over 50% of all poison exposures reported in the US. Although young children are most likely to be poisoned, adults suffer more serious injuries and death from poisonings. Medication errors/mistakes and adverse reactions to medications are common reasons for major effects and fatal outcomes among older adults. Medication errors are costly. About 10% of hospitalizations are due to medication error.

Risk factors are surrounding us in everyday life – including exercise, cholesterol, blood pressure, smoking, blood sugar, and proper use of chemicals and medications. Poisonings and medication error are the easiest to modify.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that “for every \$1 invested in poison prevention and treatment services, \$7 is saved in medical costs”. This cost benefit ratio is one of the highest in public health. Further, these savings are realized immediately, from the time the first parent/caregiver puts a medication out of sight & out of reach or calls the poison center first, rather than going to an emergency room, or calling 911.

### What happens when you call the national poison emergency hotline?



- ① You will talk to a local, specially-trained health care professional (pharmacist, nurse)
- ① He/she will ask questions about what happened, like: the name of the poison (product or medicine); how much is missing or how much was taken; when; the age and weight of the patient; how the patient is doing, etc.
- ① He/she will explain what to expect and will give instructions about what to do next.
- ① Most likely, he/she will call back to check on the patient and the process of recovery.

With help from poison center experts, **eight out of ten poison exposures can be managed where they happen** without the high cost and unnecessary use of 911 emergency services or hospital visits. Yet, less than half of all families call a poison center when a child or other family member is poisoned.

### How can YOU help?

Share the *Be Poison Smart!* & *Be Poison Wise!* message with families you know and with people in your community. You can make a difference. You can help everyone around you become poison safe.

*Thank You!*

### PREVENT ...

#### Be Poison Smart! Poison Proof

- ☞ Every time you bring something home look for “pretty poisons” (look-alikes) ..... poisonous products that look good to eat or drink but can be harmful when put in the mouth, swallowed, inhaled, get in the eye or on the skin

Store “pretty poisons”  
**out of sight & out of reach!**

- ☞ Check for poisonous plants inside and outside of your home

**Do NOT make the  
poisoned person throw up!**

Some poisons can cause more  
damage when they come back up.

*Syrup of Ipecac is no longer  
recommended.*

#### If You Think Someone is Poisoned

- ☑ Call the national poison emergency hotline to reach poison center experts closest to you

**1-800-222-1222**

**Exception:** Call 911 or your local emergency number right away if the person has collapsed, having seizures or stopped breathing!

- ☆ Medical help is provided by specially-trained pharmacists, nurses and doctors
- ☆ Confidential
- ☆ 24 hours, every day
- ☆ Free to the general public

- ☑ Bring the person and the poison to the phone if possible

### PREVENT ...

#### Be Poison Wise! Prevent Medication Mistakes

- ⇒ Know what medications you are taking and why
- ⇒ Ask questions
- ⇒ Read the labels
- ⇒ Keep a medication record
- ⇒ Use the same pharmacy to fill prescriptions
- ⇒ Get rid of unfinished and expired medication
- ⇒ Call for help if unsure

- ⚠ Do NOT take medication prescribed for others
- ⚠ Do NOT take medication in front of children
- ⚠ Do NOT call medicines candy

#### Lower Risks of Lead Poisoning

- Wash everyone’s hands often
- Dust with a damp cloth frequently
- Mop wooden floors frequently
- Flush drinking water lines & pipes
- Wash children’s toys and pacifiers
- Check for lead-paint chips
- Eat a nutritious and well-balanced diet
- Eat foods high in calcium and iron
- Ask your doctor or local health department about lead screening

----- **CAUTION** -----

Lead paint removal is dangerous and should be done by experts.  
Call your local Health Department for more information.

## Why do young children get into poisons?

### To a child, many substances are “pretty poisons”...

Products that look like something good to eat or drink but can be harmful when put in the mouth, swallowed, inhaled, get in the eye or on the skin.

#### Examples:

- ~ Soda/pop in a green bottle looks like dish soap
- ~ Blue mouth wash, antifreeze, glass cleaner all look like blueberry flavored punch or juice
- ~ Spray insecticides work the same way as a spray can of cooking oil
- ~ White plastic containers of ammonia or bleach look like milk containers

### A child is constantly changing and growing ...

Products considered safe from the reach of a 10-month-old child might become easy to reach for him/her just a few weeks or months later.

### Children learn by doing what others do ...

When they see someone smoking cigarettes, taking medicines, drinking alcohol, they will copy what they see grownups do.

### Children’s strong, natural curiosity ...

They’re often “getting into things”.

### Other factors to consider...

- Mr. Yuk sticker does not have the same effect today ... there is a larger variety of products available and they are more colorful.
- Kids are playing with stickers.
- To attract children, a few sour candy and suckers are green, with a character on them and look just like Mr. Yuk on the sticker.
- Putting the sticker on a product is just as much of an effort to remember as it is to remember to store “pretty poisons” out of sight & out of reach.
- What happens when you run out of stickers?
- Research shows that kids play with poisons that have stickers on them.

## How do adults get poisoned?

(unintentional/non-suicidal)

“pretty poisons” fool adults too – poisons do not discriminate! Poison prevention is for everyone!

- ☹ Do NOT store poisonous products next to your food and/or personal care items!
- ☹ Do NOT store poisonous products in other than their original container! Make sure the original label and care instructions are attached and readable.

**Medication mistakes** – taking a dose too close to the previous one; skipping a dose and/or taking a double dose; taking the wrong medicine; mixing medications; taking medicine the wrong way; and/or wrong units of measure.

- ☑ Know all the products that are considered medication/medicine: prescribed medications – by a doctor and/or a health care provider; Over-The-Counter (OTC) medication – any form of medicine you buy without a prescription to treat or prevent health-related problems: pain, fever, cold, flu, allergy, depression, sleep, constipation, diarrhea, eye/ear drops, ointments, skin care products that are not cosmetics; *Vitamins & Nutritional Supplements* – prescribed or OTC; Herbals, homeopathic medicines – in any form to treat or prevent health problems; *Others*: medical gases
- ☑ Keep a Medication Record (up-to-date) with you ...EMS and Emergency Room personnel will be able to treat you in the best way safely.
- ☹ Do NOT take medications prescribed for others! Everyone responds in a very different way based on medical conditions and other factors you cannot judge!
- ☹ Do NOT take old/expired medication – it could cause more damage due to chemical breakdown.

**Creating new chemicals** – often people add a little bleach or ammonia or applying one product on top of the other as they are trying to clean the bath tub, sink or the floor, etc.

- ☑ Always read the labels! (turn on the lights, put on your glasses, etc.)
- ☹ Do NOT mix cleaning products!

**No time for prevention** – most poisonings happen while everyday products are in use. Be alert!

- ☑ Always read the labels! (turn on the lights, put on your glasses, etc.)
- ☑ Have the national poison emergency hotline available at all times!
- ☑ Know the plants around and inside your home.
- ☹ Do NOT leave poisonous products unattended while answering the phone, the door or responding to other issues in need of immediate attention, etc.
- ☹ Do NOT eat wild mushrooms or berries!
- ☹ Do NOT leave food out too long!

