



[www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org)

**50 YEARS**

# Poison Prevention

Newsletter

December 2008

SUNY Upstate Medical University  
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## Beware of Holiday Hazards

Most of us are thinking about everything we need to do to get ready for the holidays. There is one more item to add to your holiday "To Do" list, **BE AWARE OF THE HOLIDAY HAZARDS!**

- **Carbon Monoxide** is an odorless, colorless gas that is quickly absorbed by the body. Carbon monoxide causes headaches, dizziness, irritability, and nausea. Be safe and install carbon monoxide detectors throughout the home.
- **Holiday Plants such as Mistletoe, Jerusalem cherry and Holly** can be a potential hazard if ingested by small children and pets. Be aware of any plants that are brought into the home during the holidays. In some cases any part of the plant can be toxic. If you have any questions call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 just to be safe.
- **Lead Poisoning** can occur very quickly when exposed to high concentrations. Be aware that holiday decorations, lights and toy gifts could contain lead. To be safe contact your local Health Department and ask for the Lead Program for more information.

## Prescription Drugs Misuse

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of poisonings and even deaths associated with the abuse of prescription medications.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH, the nation's most prevalent drug problem is the misuse of prescription drugs especially pain relievers.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health, SAMHSA, reports that, although overall teen drug use is down nationwide, more teens abuse prescription drugs than any other illicit drug, except marijuana—more than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined.

It is estimated, every day, 2,500 kids age 12 to 17 abuse a prescription painkiller for the first time, and more people are becoming addicted to prescription drugs. Drug treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005.

Some people believe that prescription drugs are safer and less addictive than illicit drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor. This is a myth, prescription drugs can be just as addictive and dangerous as illicit drugs when used in a way they were not intended. Especially troubling is that prescription drugs are easy to get and are often free, because they are in the home.

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# What's in Your Medicine Cabinet?

Do you know about the potential dangers of medication, both prescription and over the counter (OTC's) that lie in your medicine cabinet?

Many kids who abuse prescription and OTC drugs start by experimenting with drugs they find around the house. Kids have access to powerful prescription drugs in their own homes; in the homes of friends, neighbors and relatives; and on the internet. They even abuse drugs prescribed for themselves, like the commonly abused medication, Ritalin, often prescribed for attention deficit disorder.

## Tips to prevent prescription abuse

Organize and keep track of your medications. If your medicines are located in different locations like the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, organize them all into one convenient location.

Inventory, monitor and secure your medicine cabinet. Most parents are unaware when medicine is missing. Keep track of quantity, refills and expiration dates. Know what's in your medicine cabinet and keep it safe from children and teens.

Monitor all medications your children are taking and have access to. Teach your kids that only a parent or an adult caregiver should administer their medications.

Educate yourself on the problem of prescription and OTC drug abuse. Be the first one to talk to your kids about safe use of medicines. Many kids don't believe prescription drugs can be addictive or dangerous. Kids who receive information about drugs from their parents are less likely to ABUSE-them. Tell your kids about the negative effects that prescription drug abuse can have on their physical appearance, their health, their relationships, and their self-respect. Know that they are listening, even if it seems like they aren't.

For more information on the harmful effects of prescription drugs and healthy alternatives to drugs, check out these websites:

[www.painfullyobvious.com](http://www.painfullyobvious.com)

[www.rx.samhsa.gov](http://www.rx.samhsa.gov)

[www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)

[teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov)

## Announcement

# Unwanted Medication Collection Event in Broome County

On February 28, 2009 from 10am – 3pm the Village of Endicott is offering a free medicine disposal opportunity. The collection will take place at the Village's Municipal Building located at 1009 E. Main St. This is a free event open to all households and individuals. The event will be held to dispose of expired or unwanted prescriptions and medicine, vitamins and herbals, veterinary medications, and over the counter medicines. Take advantage of the opportunity to safely dispose of your unwanted prescriptions at no cost and help protect your health, our community and the environment. For more information contact Philip Grayson at 607-757-5307.

## Prescription Drugs Misuse

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The studies reveal that most parents are not aware of teen prescription drug abuse. Teens claim that their parents are not discussing this problem with them or the dangers associated with it.

Prescription drugs are prescribed with medical supervision. After a thorough examine from a doctor, the right medication and dose is prescribed for a specific medical condition. The doctor explains what the medicine is and the potentially dangerous side effects. It is important to know exactly how and when to take the medicine, including the things to avoid while taking the drug — such as drinking alcohol, smoking, or taking other medications. People that abuse prescription medications, are not aware of these dangers and the potentially serious medical consequences.

The government has devoted resources to address this growing problem. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) launched its first major Federal effort to educate parents about teen prescription drug abuse. Millions of television viewers watched the advertising kickoff of this national public awareness campaign during the Super Bowl on January 24, 2008. Since then additional efforts focused on community resources, print and on-line resources to create awareness of this problem.

### Sources:

[www.oncdp.gov](http://www.oncdp.gov). *Prescription for Danger: A Report on the Troubling Trend of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse among the Nation's Teens* is available online at [http://theantidrug.com/pdfs/prescription\\_report.pdf](http://theantidrug.com/pdfs/prescription_report.pdf).

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/drugs/prescription\\_drug\\_abuse.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/prescription_drug_abuse.html)

<http://www.samhsa.gov/> and <https://nsduhweb.rti.org/>

# Safe Disposal of Medicines

There are real concerns about recently published information. Environmental studies have shown traces of prescription drugs in our drinking water. Flushing unwanted medicines down the toilet may no longer be acceptable

The problem is the solutions are not consistent and conflicting opinions on safe disposal cloud the issue. Some pharmacies are willing to accept outdated and unwanted medicines and handle the disposal, but not all pharmacies. Some pharmacists suggested flushing the medicine down the toilet, or throwing it out in the trash.

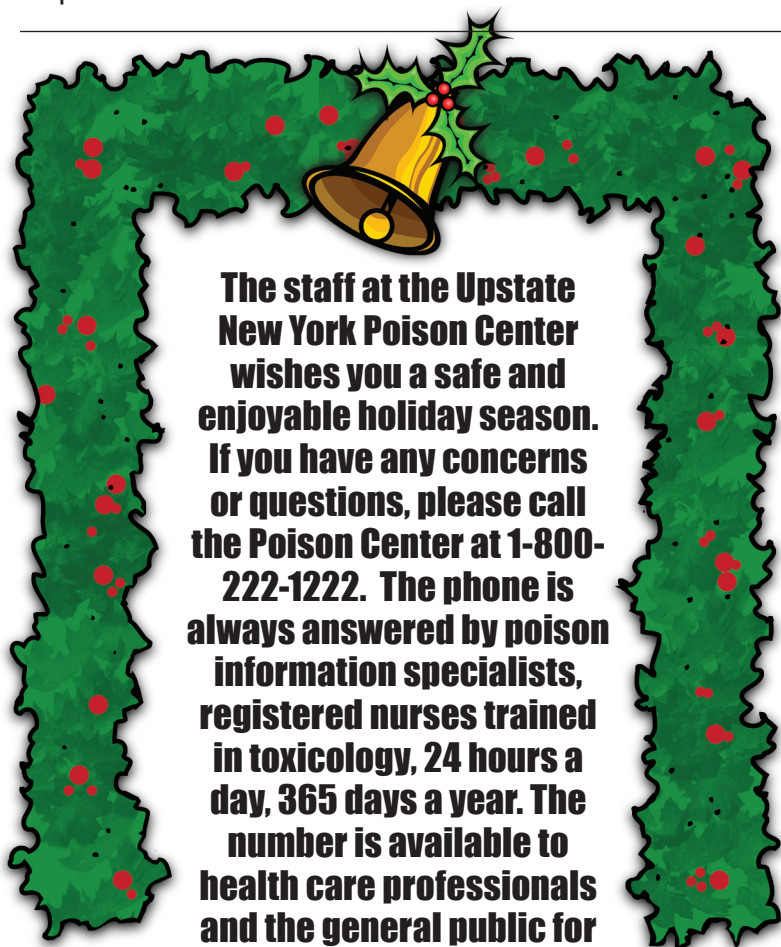
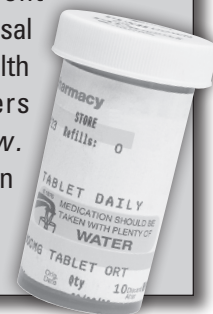
I began my search for the best answer to this difficult question. I queried the laws of New York State to see if the government could offer a solution. I found that on January 3, 2007 a bill, A840B was re-introduced to the Assembly addressing this very issue. The title of the bill was: **An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the management and disposal of drugs.** June 12, 2008, the Assembly referred the bill to the Departments of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Health, charging them with the task of proper disposal guidelines.

Part of the solution was the creation of an educational website [www.DontFlushYourDrugs.net](http://www.DontFlushYourDrugs.net). The site provides guidelines for safe disposal of medications for households and individuals.

## The Upstate New York Poison Center's recommendations for Safe Medicine Disposal are:

- Contact your local pharmacy and ask if they will dispose of it
- Contact your county Health Department
- Contact your Waste Management and Recycle Center

Every county has different procedures for handling disposal of medicines. For a list of Health Department phone numbers visit our website [www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org) click on "Links/Resources"



**The staff at the Upstate New York Poison Center wishes you a safe and enjoyable holiday season. If you have any concerns or questions, please call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. The phone is always answered by poison information specialists, registered nurses trained in toxicology, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The number is available to health care professionals and the general public for both poison information and emergencies.**



## Poison Proof Your Home



You can prevent poisonings if you...

- "Poison-proof" your home
- Use and store products safely
- Read the label
- Choose products carefully
- Know what to do when a poisoning occurs

## Is Your House Safe?

Visit our website at [www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org) and click on Kids Stuff and then Billie's Poison Prevention Checklist. Go through this checklist for each room in your house and make sure that all potential poisons are properly closed and stored out of the reach of small children and animals.

# CALLING AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



A Service of the State University of  
New York Upstate Medical University at  
University Hospital, Syracuse.

## Unintentional Poisoning Can Happen To You...At Any Age!

To receive your **FREE** telephone stickers, magnets, and information brochures, dial 1-800-222-1222 ask for the Health Educator at The Upstate New York Poison Center.