



Poison Prevention

Newsletter

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UPSTATE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

Top tips to prevent poisoning this holiday season:

- Keep alcohol, including baking extracts, out of reach and do not leave alcoholic drinks unattended.
- Color additives used in fireplace fires are a toxic product and should be stored out of reach.
- Artificial snow can be harmful if inhaled, so use it in a well-vented space.
- Mistletoe berries, Holly Berry and Jerusalem Cherry can be poisonous. If they are used in decorating, make sure children and pets cannot reach it.
- In a poison emergency, call your Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Reminder that National Poison Prevention Week is March 14-20, 2010

In 1961, Congress established National Poison Prevention Week as a national observation during the third full week of March. The week is intended to highlight the dangers of poisonings for people of all ages and to promote community involvement in poisoning prevention on a local and national level. The observance is coordinated by the National Poison Prevention Week Council, a group of public and private organizations, including Poison Centers, committed to reducing unintentional poisonings, promoting poison prevention, and coordinating annual activities.



Poison Proofing Your Home for the Holidays

The holidays are a wonderful time to decorate your home; they can also set the scene for unintentional poisonings. Take time to read what the decorations are made of and where they are produced. Many decorations have paints and other chemicals that might contain high levels of lead and cadmium. Cadmium is a known carcinogen that, like lead, can delay brain development in young children, leading to learning disabilities. Research also shows that long-term exposure can cause cancer and kidney problems.

Children's gifts you may purchase, like jewelry and children's toys, can contain cadmium. China is a major producer of products exported and sold in the US including children's products. Some of the most toxic products are children's charms and bracelets. While China has banned manufactures from using lead, some manufactures have replaced it with cadmium. Children don't have to swallow cadmium to be exposed to it. A child who regularly sucks or bites on an item containing cadmium, puts himself at a higher risk for a toxic exposure.

Bruce A. Fowler, a toxicologist and cadmium specialist at the U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) warns, "There's nothing positive that you can say about this metal. It's a poison." It ranks number seven on the CDC's list of 275 most hazardous substances in the environment behind arsenic, lead and mercury.

Alcoholic beverages are often left within the reach of children during the holiday can be an easy opportunity for a poison exposure. To prevent alcohol poisoning, keep alcohol products out of the reach of children. Teach your children to "Stop and Ask First" before touching, tasting, smelling or putting anything in their mouths.

Enjoy the holidays but make the effort to keep your family safe. Just in case, program the number of the poison center into your phone at 1-800-222-1221 or put a poison center sticker or magnet on or near the phone. If you don't have a poison center sticker or magnet call the Poison Center health educator at 315-464-5375 today!

Sources: http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2010/01/11/2010-01-11_toxic_lead_replaced_in_childrens_toys_trinkets_by_something_even_worse__cadmium.html#ixzz16s4UjEA4, <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/cercla/07list.html>

Avoid Pet Poisonings

According to the American Humane Association, many household items can be poisonous to pets. The most common are the ingestion of medications, foods, plants and toxins such as cleaning and automotive products. Pet poisonings can be avoided through some simple precautions. Medications used to treat human symptoms are not meant for animals. Never give your animal a medication formulated for humans. Products such as acetaminophen, aspirin products, birth control pills and vitamins can cause internal bleeding in your pet.

People Foods, Chemicals and Medications

People often make the mistake of thinking that all “people food” is okay for pets.

- Milk is not easily digested by most adult animals and can cause them to develop diarrhea.
- Bones can lodge in a dog's passageways or can puncture an intestine.
- Chocolate, especially baking chocolate, can be lethal.
- Onions can destroy a dog's red blood cells, leading to anemia.
- Rich, fatty foods such as turkey skins or gravy can cause pancreatitis and inflammation of a digestive gland that can be very painful and often times serious.
- Grapes and raisins can lead to loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and acute renal failure in dogs, which could result in death.
- Coffee is also dangerous for animals, causing GI or cardiac problems.
- Nicotine is a stimulant that can increase the heart rate, leading to collapse and even death.
- Alcoholic beverages should be kept away from animals at all times as it can cause an irregular heartbeat, seizures, tremors and even death.
- Cats tend to be attracted to unusual flavors, so keep them away from calamine lotion, diaper rash ointments, sunblock and analgesic ointments. These products contain an acid related to those in aspirin and will prove toxic if ingested.

Pets often have easy access to cleaning and automotive products. Follow the same rule of prevention with pets that apply to children; safely store chemicals and automotive products up and out of the way. Lock them in a cabinet when possible.

If you think that your pet has been exposed to a poison, call your veterinarian. For immediate help call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-426-4435 or The Pet Poison Helpline at 1-800-213-6680.

Sources: <http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/>, <http://www.americanhumane.org/protecting-animals/adoption-pet-care/safety/pets-and-poisons.html>



Program Your Cell Phone with the 1-800-222-1222 Poison Center Number

Cell phones are an integral part of modern communication. According to a statement by Federal Trade Commission Chairman, Julius Genachowski, 87% of the US population has a cell phone. Give yourself the gift of “peace of mind” this holiday season and program your cell phone right now, with the number for the Poison Center, 1-800-22-1222. When you call from anywhere in the US you will reach a Poison Center ready to help you.

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

CO is a leading cause of poison deaths, especially in the winter months. Every year Poison Centers handle hundreds of calls involving carbon monoxide (CO) poisonings. As with most unintentional poison exposures, they are preventable. CO is very dangerous because it is a poisonous gas that has no color, odor or taste. Nearly every home has some sort of fuel burning device that creates CO. These devices can become deadly when they are not working properly or they are not used in a ventilated space. Many homes are sealed in the winter to keep the heat inside. Therefore CO gas often collects in closed spaces such as hallways and bedrooms. Most people are unaware that they are exposed to CO poisoning until it is too late.

The most common sources of CO are: gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas stoves, gas ovens, kerosene space heaters, wood and gas fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, power generators, and car engines.

The signs of CO poisoning are similar to the symptoms of the flu and some cold-weather viruses, including headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and confusion. The people at the greatest risk of CO poisoning are pregnant women, infants, young children, older people,

people with diseases that affect breathing, and people with heart disease.

Reading about precautions can create awareness but reading and taking action can save lives!

To prevent CO poisonings in your home use this checklist as a guide and take action today.

- Have at least one CO alarm in your home. The best places for CO alarms are near bedrooms and close to furnaces.
- Have your heating system, vents, and chimney checked every year by experts.
- Always follow product instructions for installing and repairing appliances that burn fuel.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house or garage.
- Never use a gas oven to heat a house or apartment.
- Never use unvented fuel-burning devices in a house or apartment.
- Never run a car in a closed garage.

Synthetic Pot Peril – Poison and Young Adults

Synthetic cannabinoids—commonly known as “Spice,” “K2,” “Genie,” “Yucatan Fire,” “Sence,” “Smoke,” “Skunk” and “Zohai” —have been used as a popular legal alternative to marijuana. Until now, that is. At least ten states outlawed the drug this year.

Synthetic cannabinoids are chemically engineered substances, similar to THC—the active ingredient in marijuana—that, when smoked or ingested, can produce a high similar to marijuana. Initially it was developed during research related to treatment of pain.

The drug is sprayed onto dried herbs, marketed as “novelty herbal incense” or potpourri, and then smoked or ingested. It produces a high similar to marijuana and is sold in local convenience stores and over the Web. Although the product labels often read “not for human consumption,” abuse of these substances appears to be increasing. The American Association of Poison Control Centers reports that, as of Sept. 27, more than 1,503 calls have been made to Poison Centers for symptoms such as racing heartbeat, elevated blood pressure and nausea. This is up from a total of only 14 calls in 2009.

There also have been reports linking use of these drugs to hallucinations, seizures and even death. After a Minnesota teenager ended up in the hospital from using K2, Minnesota Senator Kathy Sieben announced plans to introduce legislation next session to protect kids by outlawing these substances.

Kansas was the first state to pass legislation this year banning synthetic cannabinoids. Nine other states have passed similar measures making it illegal to possess, use, manufacture or sell the substances. Bills are pending in at least four other states.

Other action at the state level includes administrative bans in Arkansas, Hawaii, Iowa and North Dakota. The Hawaii Narcotics Enforcement Division applied an emergency ban on “chemicals in Spice/K2.” The ban is temporary, pending action by the Hawaii Legislature in the 2011 session. In Idaho, a newly formed advisory committee is reviewing whether synthetic cannabinoids should be added to the list of controlled substances and will make a recommendation to the Legislature before the 2011 session begins.

The latest news update

On November 24, the DEA has banned (temporarily) the substances known as ‘K2’ or ‘Spice’, scheduling them as a Class 1 drug, along with heroin and marijuana.

Source: <http://www.ncsl.org/?TabId=21436#pot>, National Conference of State Legislatures

Increase in ER Visits Involving Accidental Ingestion of Drugs by Children

The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related Emergency Department (ED) visits in the United States. According to a recent report published in September 2010, in 2008 there were an estimated 100,340 ED visits involving accidental ingestion of drugs. Of these, 68.9 percent were by patients aged five or younger and medications were involved in the majority of the ED visits. While 40.8 percent of those visits involved drugs that act on the central nervous system, children under 5 ingest a wide variety of both over the counter and prescription medications.



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.