



www.upstatepoison.org

50 YEARS

Poison Prevention

Newsletter

June 2010

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

A Case of Mistaken Identity

With thousands of products on the market and a limited number of packaging options, food products can easily be confused with cleaning products or other toxic products.

Some medicines look the same as some candies, like Sudafed and candy Redhots, for example. When you take these or other “look-alikes” out of their original containers and put them side-by-side you will often be amazed as to how similar they are. Children can be easily confused (or might just be plain curious) if the medicine is left within their reach. As a result, they are at a high risk for poisoning.

Take a closer look around your home. No doubt you can easily find medicines that look like candy; shampoo that looks like soda or a cleaning product that looks like juice.

Follow these simple steps to reduce the risk of mistaken identity happening to you.

- Stop and read the label.
- Keep products in their original containers or packaging.
- Avoid storing products that look similar in the same location.
- Always have the number of the Poison Center readily available

1-800-222-1222

Beware the Dangers of Button Batteries

<http://poison.org/battery/>

The National Capital Poison Center reports:

Every year in the United States, more than 3,500 people of all ages swallow miniature disc or “button” batteries. These are used to power hearing aids, watches, toys, games, flashing jewelry, singing greeting cards, remote control devices, and many other items.

Most button batteries pass through the body and are eliminated in the stool. However, sometimes batteries get “hung up”, and these are the ones that cause problems. A battery that is stuck in the esophagus is especially likely to cause tissue damage. An electrical current can form around the outside of the battery, generating hydroxide (an alkaline chemical) and causing a tissue burn. When a battery is swallowed, it is impossible to know whether it will pass through or get “hung up”.

If anyone ingests a battery, this is what you should do:

1. Immediately call the 24-hour National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 202-625-3333 (call collect if necessary), or call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222.
2. If readily available, provide the battery identification number, found on the package or from a matching battery.
3. An x-ray must be obtained right away to be sure that the battery has gone through the esophagus into the stomach. (If the battery remains in the esophagus, it must be removed immediately. Most batteries move on to the stomach and can be allowed to pass by themselves.)
4. Don't induce vomiting. Don't eat or drink until the x-ray shows the battery is beyond the esophagus.
5. Watch for fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, or blood in the stools. Report these symptoms immediately.
6. Check the stools until the battery has passed.
7. Your physician or the emergency room may call the National Button Battery Ingestion Hotline/National Capital Poison Center collect at 202-625-3333 for consultation about button batteries. Expert advice is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Button batteries may also cause permanent injury when they are placed in the nose or the ears. Young children and elderly people have been particularly involved in this kind of incident. Symptoms to watch for are pain and/or a discharge from the nose or ears. DO NOT use nose or eardrops until a physician has examined the person, as these fluids can cause additional injury if a battery is involved.

Poison Quiz

Have You Ever Been Poisoned?

Most people don't believe that they have ever been poisoned. Take this short quiz to see if you have ever been poisoned.

Y	N	Have you ever been stung or bitten by an insect or animal?
Y	N	Have you ever felt light-headed after breathing in fumes from paint, gas or propane product?
Y	N	Have you ever had sunburn that made your skin blister and peel?
Y	N	Have you ever ate or drank something that made you sick?
Y	N	Have you ever mistakenly taken too much of the wrong medicine?
Y	N	Have you ever accidentally sprayed, splashed or rubbed something on your skin or in your eye and had a reaction?

If you answered YES to any of the questions then you have experienced a poisoning. A poison is an exposure to anything that can cause harm to humans or pets. Most poisonings are minor and can be treated at home without going to the emergency department or a doctor. However, there are some poison exposures that are serious and even life threatening and need immediate medical attention. In either case this is where the Poison Center can help.

Everyday millions of people of all ages are poisoned. By having the number of the Poison Center readily available in the home, at work or programmed in your phone, you have access to the experts on poisonings. When you dial 1-800-222-1222 highly trained poison specialists answer your call. We are available 24/7/365 and the call is free!

Don't risk guessing what to do in a poison emergency, call us! We are here for you.

June is Home Safety Month

Although most people feel safe in their homes, many injuries can and do occur there. In New York State, 40% of all unintentional injuries resulting in hospitalizations and 20% of all emergency department visits involving unintentional injuries occur in the home. Children and older adults often are at greatest risk for these injuries. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to decrease your family's risk for many types of injury, including poisoning.

To learn more about home safety please visit the following websites:

- www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention
- www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/firewww.html
- www.upstatepoison.org



High School Students Abusing Prescription Drugs

The CDC announced that the 2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found 1 in 5 high school students in the United States report taking a prescription drug, including: OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax, without a doctor's prescription. This is the first year the survey assessed prescription drug abuse among high school students. According to Grant Baldwin, PhD, MPH, Director of CDC's Injury Center Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, "Teens and others have a false assumption that prescription drugs are a safer 'high' than illegal drugs".

Both the new YRBS data and CDC's Injury Center's issue brief, "Unintentional Drug Poisoning in the United States" highlight a serious public health problem with nonmedical use of prescription drugs. Drug overdose rates have risen steadily in the United States since 1999, with most of the increase due to prescription drugs.

Data from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimate that in 2008 people 12-20 years old accounted for an estimated 141,417 of the 971,914 emergency department visits for nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals. These numbers do not include suicide attempts.

The CDC continues to respond to this problem through surveillance activities, epidemiologic research, and evaluation of interventions with the greatest promise of creating a public health impact.

For more information visit our source for this article:

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>

DANGEROUS ROADSIDE PLANTS IN NYS

Generally, a good rule to follow with poisonous plants is "leaves of three leave it be". However, the truth is that not all poisonous plants can be identified by the number of leaves.

In New York State, dangerous plants are easily found along the highways and roadsides. While contact with many of these plants can produce pain and itching for a few hours, some cause blisters, burning and scarring that may last for several years.

Giant Hogweed is a very large, erect biennial or perennial with small white flowers forming a large, flat-topped umbel up to 2.5 feet across. Hollow, rigid stems grow 2–4 inches in diameter and 8–14 feet tall and have purple blotches and coarse hairs. The leaves can grow to 5 feet across, are lobed and deeply incised. It produces a sap that contains a phototoxin that causes skin to be sensitive to sunlight. When the sap comes in contact with the skin it can produce painful, burning blisters within 24 to 48 hours after contact as well as red blotches that can develop into scars that persist for several years. Giant Hogweed has been declared a Federal Noxious Weed, meaning it is illegal to propagate, sell or transport this plant in the United States. It appears in late summer.

Cow Parsnip is a large plant that grows from 3–10 feet tall. Leaves are 12"–18" and rough and hairy. Leaves are divided into 3 segments, with coarsely toothed leaflets and a broad wing at the base of each leaf stalk. Stems are rough, hairy, hollow and grooved. It has white or cream

colored flowers with a sweet fragrance. Flowers have 5 petals of different sizes and are arranged in broad, flat-topped clusters at the top of short stalks. Cow Parsnip also produces a sap that contains a phototoxin that reacts with ultraviolet light to cause skin irritation ranging from a mild rash to severe blistering. It blooms in mid-summer.

Stinging Nettle is a perennial, erect herb with stinging hairs; opposite heart-shaped leaves, small greenish flowers. The stinging hairs on stems and leaves produce an intense burning and itching sensation that can last up to thirty minutes.

Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac are perennial plants that grow erect or as trailing vines with aerial rootlets. Leaves are 3-parted. Flowers (May–July) are small yellowish and it produces small, smooth white rounded fruit (August–November) that form a cluster. It can grow as a vine, as a groundcover or as a shrub. Poison Ivy and Poison Oak are very similar in appearance and both cause irritation with urushiol oil. Poison Oak has more rounded leaves and points. Its leaf surface is also less smooth, tending to be "lumpy" between the veins.

Protect yourself and your children from these dangerous plants by knowing what they look like. For pictures of these poisonous plants and more information go to the links page on our website www.upstatepoison.org or <https://www.nysdot.gov/dangerous-plants>

Source: New York State Department of Transportation <https://www.nysdot.gov/dangerous-plants>

Pet Poisonings

According to statistics compiled by the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, the summer months are the most dangerous for pets. Pets are like children. As curious creatures, they get into things they shouldn't and unfortunately most everything they find goes into their mouths. You can help protect your pets from lesser-known poisons by preventing exposure to them. Some common summer pet dangers include:

Charcoal Lighter Fluid: Contact with lighter fluid can cause skin to dry and crack. If your pet ingests it, vomiting can occur. Inhalation can result and chemical pneumonia and swelling can result.

Wooden Deck Wash or Tire Wash: Corrosive agents in these cleansers can cause burns and swelling in the mouth and throat, if ingested.

Grapes and Raisins: Liver failure can occur in dogs after ingestion of any variety of grapes or raisins.

Macadamia Nuts: Temporary, hind limb paralysis can occur in dogs that eat large amounts of these nuts.

Lilies: These plants, including Easter, tiger, stargazer, Japanese show, and some day lilies, can cause renal failure in cats. Even a small amount from any part of the plant can cause a severe reaction.

Pet First-Aid Kit for Poisoning

Just as the metabolism of a pet is quite different from that of a human, the metabolism of different species of animals can also function quite differently. Pet poison exposures should to be managed or treated by veterinarians. We recommend you keep the telephone number of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center – (888) 426-4435 – as well as that of your local veterinarian, in a prominent location, just in case.

Be prepared for a poison exposure and invest in an emergency first-aid kit for your pet. The kit should contain:

- A fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide, 3 percent USP (to induce vomiting)
- A turkey baster, bulb syringe or large medicine syringe (to administer peroxide)
- Saline eye solution
- Artificial tear gel (to lubricate eyes after flushing)
- Mild grease-cutting dishwashing liquid (for bathing an animal after skin contamination)

Pet Poisonings

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- Forceps (to remove stingers)
- A muzzle (to protect against fear- or excitement-induced biting)
- A can of your pet's favorite wet food
- A pet carrier



Always consult a veterinarian for directions on how and when to use any emergency first-aid item. Remember these 3 sources for pet poisonings:

- The Animal Poison Hotline 888-232-8870, sponsored by North Shore Animal League America and PROSAR International Animal Poison Center
- The Pet Poison Helpline™ 1-800-213-6680 is staffed with board-certified veterinary toxicologist, affiliated with the University of Minnesota. <http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/>
- ASPCA - Animal Poison Control Center 1-888-426-4435 <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/>

Sources: The Animal Poison Hotline, The Pet Poison Helpline™ and ASPCA - Animal Poison Control Center

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.