



Poison Prevention

Newsletter

March 2013

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

Death by Misprint?

The famous Mark Twain once said, "Be careful of reading health books, you may die from a misprint." The same may be said of reading health information on the Internet.

While parents regularly call Poison Control about things that are surely poisonous, like medicine or bleach, with more questionable items, like cigarette butts or silica gel crystals, parents often turn to the Internet for their answer.

We conducted a Google search! In addition to inaccurate information about poisonings, we found sites that still recommend using syrup of ipecac or activated charcoal for a poisoning at home. Since 2003, the American Academy of Physicians and thereafter the American Association of Poison Centers have recommended neither be used for a poisoning in the home!

Websites may or may not contain reliable information and even if generally reliable, they may not contain the most up to date information. Additionally, Poison Specialists are trained to listen and ask questions to help solve the problem. They may provide related information or precautions. Through accurate and effective recommendations, Poison Centers are able to manage 86% of calls at home without a costly visit to the Emergency Department.

Please be aware, it is easier to dial Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 than it is to type "are those little packets you get in new shoes, poisonous?" or any other question. In dialing the 1-800-222-1222

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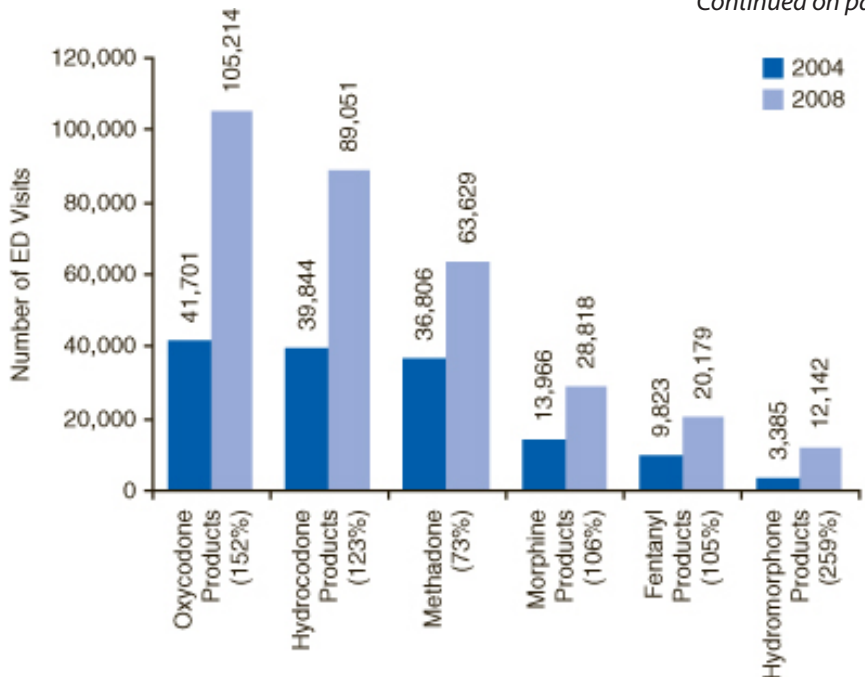
Pain Medication: Misuse and Abuse

Morphine and codeine are opiates derived from the poppy plant and are used to manage pain. Opioids are chemically made to produce effects similar to opiates. These pain relievers include hydrocodone (Vicodin) and oxycodone (Percocet) as well as fentanyl and methadone. Another narcotic-like drug commonly used for pain is Tramadol. If you have had recent dental work, back pain or joint surgery or if you have an elderly relative dealing with chronic pain, you may be familiar with some of these names. What you might not know are the facts:

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) report:

- Since 1990 there has been a tenfold increase in opioid prescriptions written with 21 million legal prescriptions written in 2007
- 2004-2007: ED visits doubled for opioid misuse (using it for other than as prescribed on the label)
- 2007: 5.2 Million people over 12 years of age reported using prescriptions "non-medically"
- 2007: Unintentional poisoning deaths led motor vehicle deaths (CDC)
- 2008: The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) reported that of the estimated 100,340 emergency department (ED) visits involving accidental ingestion of pharmaceuticals, 68.9 percent were for patients aged 5 or younger. The largest percentages were from pain

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* Percentages shown in parentheses represent the percent changes between 2004 and 2008. Source: 2008 (08/2009 update) SAMHSA Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN).

relievers (21.1 percent)

A few of the many issues related to this complex problem are:

An increase in the numbers of prescriptions has led to easier access to these powerful drugs in and around the home. Raids on medicine cabinets are common, whether taking a family member’s prescription or taking drugs from the home of another.

Many of those who abuse these drugs start out as non-typical “users”, as soccer moms, bus drivers, the “wounded warriors” who begin using opioids as legitimately prescribed for pain relief. However, *misuse* can often escalate to *abuse* (addiction).

Huge advertising dollars are used to advertise prescription products. Advertising often exaggerates the benefits and limits information on the potential harm. Patients now often ask their doctors if a drug they have seen on TV will work for them.

Oftentimes, pain relief prescriptions are written for many more pills than the average patient will use, leaving these drugs accessible within the home.

Pharmacies in NYS cannot legally take back prescribed drugs. Customers polled by the Poison Center indicated they would just leave unused medicine in their medicine cabinets.

Also, contributing to the problem is the “celebrity factor” as usage in this population often escalates modeling

behavior. If a famous star is doing it, must be ok.

Opioids are potent drugs, which should only be used according to a doctor’s directions for the specific person, amount and pain for which it was prescribed. Once the pain ceases, usage of the drug should as well. Lock up any unused medication. Dispose of it as soon as possible through local drug disposal days led twice annually (April and October) by the DEA and through the efforts of many



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number from anywhere in the United States, you will speak with a trained Poison Information Specialist, available 24 hours every day to take your call. They are experts in poisons, with all the necessary resources at their fingertips to help you with any poison questions.

So next time even if you think the poison was swallowed, breathed in, or splashed on someone’s skin or eyes, the poison center experts will tell you what to do next. Call the experts at Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222. We’ll be waiting for your call.



Friday, April 12 ♦ 5:30 - 9 pm ♦ The Oncenter,
800 South State St., Syracuse

Join us for craft beers and wine tastings, dinner, live and silent auctions, and a mystery to solve.

THE PLOT: The Mystery unfolds upon arrival and progresses toward a solution as guests sample great beers and wines. A dinner and a Silent Auction add fun and intrigue.

For tickets 315-464-5610 or get tickets online at:
www.upstate.edu/advocates/mystery

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*Key Recipient is the Upstate
New York Poison Center at
Upstate Medical University*

Medication Safety

It is estimated that each year 1.5 million people in the United States are affected by a medication error. Most of the errors are unintentional and can be prevented.

The best way to prevent medication errors is to be actively involved in the every decision involving you and your family's health care. Research shows that patients who are more involved in their health care tend to get better results. Medication errors typically happen when patients and health care providers have problems communicating. Improve your communication with your healthcare provider, pharmacist, and insurance provider to ensure that you understand the medications you are taking are right for you and your family.

The U.S Department of Health and Human Services and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recommend the following tips to help prevent medication errors.

1. Make sure that all of your doctors know about every medicine you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements, such as vitamins and herbs.
2. Bring all of your medicines and supplements to your doctor visits. "Brown bagging" your medicines can help you and your doctor talk about them and find out if there are any problems. It can also help your doctor keep your records up to date and help you get better quality care.
3. Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines. This can help you to avoid getting a medicine that could harm you.



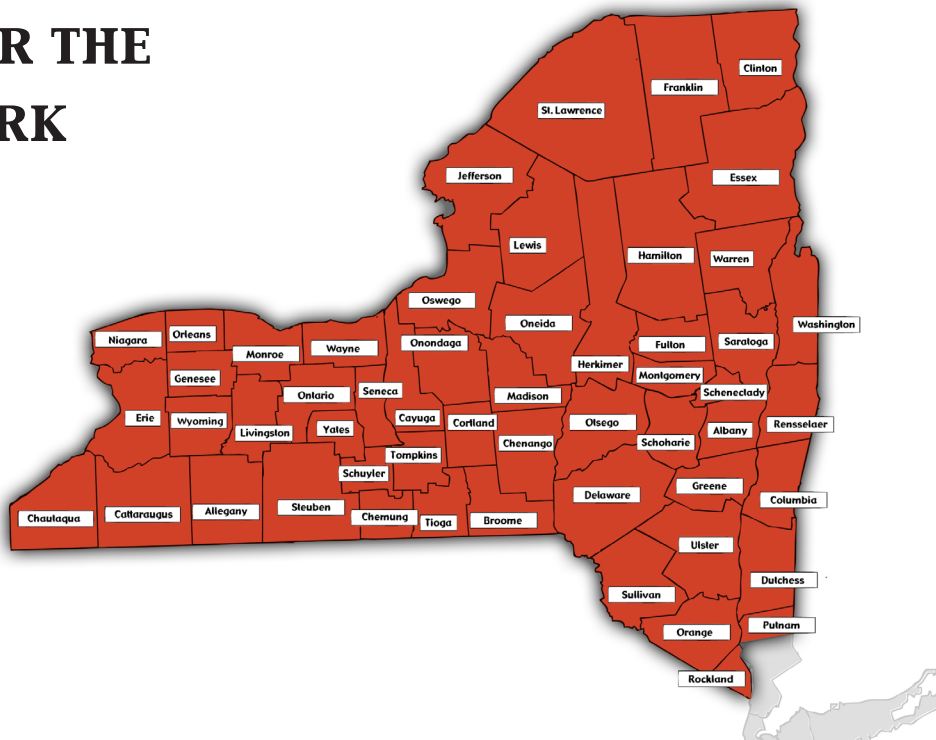
4. Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand—both when your medicines are prescribed and when you get them:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How am I supposed to take it and for how long?
 - What side effects are likely? What do I do if they occur?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
 - What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
5. When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, ask: Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?
6. If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, ask. Medicine labels can be hard to understand. For example, ask if "four times daily" means taking a dose every 6 hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours.
7. Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. For example, many people use household teaspoons, which often do not hold a true teaspoon of liquid. Special devices, like marked syringes, help people measure the right dose.
8. Ask for written information about the side effects your medicine could cause. If you know what might happen, you will be better prepared if it does or if something unexpected happens.

Source: AHRQ Publication No. 11-0089 <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/20tips.htm>

SERVICE AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



UPSTATE
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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.