

		Upstate New York Poison Center
1-800-222-1222		
www.upstatepoison.org		

Poison Prevention

Newsletter

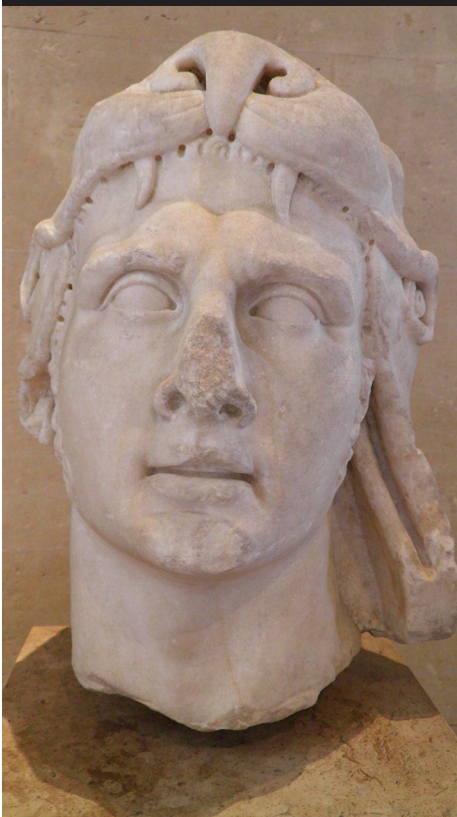
December 2015

UPSTATE
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

DID YOU KNOW...

The name of the first 'universal antidote', said to cure all types of poisoning was mithridatium. King Mithridates VI in 150 BC was paranoid about poison and developed mithridatium, which he took daily. When his castle was under siege he tried to poison himself, but because of the dose of antidote he took regularly, he failed and had himself stabbed.



The Poison Center Wishes You a Safe Holiday!

During the holidays, we plan for gifts, lights, and cookies but generally we do not plan for a poisoning. However, poisonings can and do happen because of changes in routine and increased distractions caused by the holiday festivities. Children are particularly at risk due to their curious nature and may have greater access to a variety of holiday items such as Christmas plants, decorations and even visitors' medications.

If traveling for the holidays or entertaining guests in your home, be sure to keep suitcases and purses out of the reach of children and pets. Too often they contain medicines, cosmetics, cigarettes, including e-cigarettes as well as other toxic substances that could poison a child.

- Mouthwashes, liquid hand sanitizers, perfumes and colognes may contain high amounts of alcohol. Even small amounts can be toxic to a child.
- Personal care products, like toothpaste and soaps, can cause vomiting or diarrhea.
- Eating even small amounts of tobacco products can be harmful causing nausea, vomiting and even seizures. Be aware, refills for e-cigarettes can contain enough nicotine to kill a child.
- Watches, cameras, hearing aids, games and calculators may contain button batteries (flat, coin-like batteries). If ingested, button batteries usually pass through the body in the stool, but can get stuck in the throat or stomach causing an obstruction or serious internal burns.
- Decorative papers are often made in countries with few environment laws. These products can contain lead, synthetic inks, plastic film, chlorine or metal-based foils, any of which could be toxic to our bodies and to our environment. Be sure to read product labels. Burning them could release the toxins into the air. Most importantly, don't let pets and children chew on these items.

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Western New York Efforts to Reduce Heroin Use

Heroin use has escalated across the US among most age groups, and all income levels. Some of the most dramatic increases occurred in groups with historically low rates of heroin use: women, the privately insured, and people with higher incomes. As heroin use has increased, so have heroin-related overdose deaths. Most heroin users start by abusing prescription pain medication. Once addicted, heroin is cheaper than prescription drugs bought on the street.

As of September 2015, 118 people in Erie County NY have died from heroin and/or other opiate overdoses (compared to 127 for all of 2014). Because heroin is highly addictive, readily available and relatively cheap, the Erie County Health Department is anticipating this number continuing to rise.

According to the Drug Enforcement Agency, four out of five new heroin users started with prescription pain medicines. According to the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 6.5 million Americans abused controlled prescription drugs. That same study showed that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, often from the home medicine cabinet. In an effort to lower accessibility, the DEA began a National Prescription Drug Take-Back Initiative in September of 2010. Since their inception, these events have cumulatively collected over 5 million pounds of drugs nation-wide.

On September 26, 2015, led by Buffalo DEA, members of local/county/state law enforcement in western NY, Erie County Environmental Planning, western county health departments, treatment/prevention providers, pharmacists, pharmacy students, the Upstate New York Poison Center and countless volunteers held their 10th Medication Take Back Day. What started as a small committee with a few members coming together to give residents an option for proper disposal of medication, has evolved into an extremely successful coalition, promoting proper disposal of prescriptions while keeping our drinking water safe.

Residents can now choose from 37 locations covering Erie County, Niagara County, Chautauqua County, Cattaraugus County, Allegany County, and Wyoming County to properly dispose of unwanted, unused and/or expired medications. Close to 11,000 pounds of medications were collected through this latest drug collection effort in western NY. Efforts are in place to plan the next DEA Drug Take Back Day, slated for July 28, 2016.



Cortland County Drug Take Back Event



Cars line up at the Cortlandville fire station to drop off unused medications

Over 200 cars drove through for the recent medication collection event in Cortland County that allows people to safely dispose of medication they are no longer using. Since the program was introduced five years ago, community members have safely disposed of 10,803 pounds of unused, expired and unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medications free of charge, safely and securely.

SO WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL THOSE MEDICATIONS?

According to federal law, the destruction of the controlled substances must be witnessed by two law enforcement officials. Under the supervision of the Cortland County Sheriff's Department, the medications are taken to the Oswego County Energy Recovery Facility where they are safely incinerated. The facility processes 50 tons of burnable garbage every day. "We can incinerate 500 pounds of burnable garbage every six minutes," said Plant Manager Pat Ryan. Burning at 1,800 degrees, the incinerator turned the medications to ash in minutes.

Oswego County built the plant 30 years ago to convert waste to energy. A sophisticated air pollution control system and periodic plant upgrades have kept the facility in compliance with the Clean Air Act. "We are a zero discharge plant to the environment," said Ryan. "The ash is sent to the landfill and used as cover material. We recover all ferrous materials and send them to a metal recycling company."

Cortland County Drug Take Back Event

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Steam energy produced by the plant's boilers is sold to a local manufacturer through a long-standing partnership with the facility. In addition, the plant generates four megawatts of electric power – enough to supply 3,000 to 4,000 Oswego County homes.

Incinerating the collected medications is a small task for the Energy Recovery Facility but Ryan is happy they can provide the service. "Incinerating the meds keeps them out of the water table which is better for the environment," he said.

ABOUT THE MEDICATION COLLECTION PROGRAM

Flushing meds down the toilet or throwing them away in the trash, can negatively impact community safety and health. Medication collection events help to inform individuals who may not be aware of what to do with unused medications about proper medication disposal, especially involving controlled substances.

Drug abuse, accidental poisonings and overdoses involving prescription meds, especially that involving pain medication, continue to increase at alarming rates. Medications stored at home are at a higher risk for diversion, promoting misuse and abuse. Studies show that the majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends. The more easily available and accessible the greater the chances are for abuse and or misuse.

The next drive through collection event will be on April 30, 2016. However, the Cortland County Rx Task Force has also implemented medication disposal boxes throughout the community. The boxes offer residents the chance to immediately dispose of unused medication so it is not accessible in the home. The boxes are available 24/7 at the following locations: the Cortland County Sheriff's Department, the City of Cortland Police Department, SUNY Cortland Police Department, and from 9am-5pm at the Village of Homer Police Department.

The Poison Center Wishes You a Safe Holiday!

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- Chocolate is poisonous to dogs. Darker chocolate is more harmful than milk chocolate. The chocolate can cause excited behavior, muscle tremors, increased heart rate and even seizures.

Plants are often given as gifts during the holiday season. Some of them are poisonous.

- **Mistletoe:** Swallowing berries and leaves can cause an upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea. Rash can result. Larger amounts may cause more serious effects.
- **Holly:** Swallowing the berries and leaves can cause an upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea. Drowsiness and dehydration (dryness resulting from loss of water) can occur if large amounts are swallowed.
- **Jerusalem cherry:** Swallowing berries and possibly the leaves can upset the stomach, and cause vomiting, diarrhea, or headache. Larger amounts can cause drowsiness or excitability.
- **Poinsettia:** These plants have a pretty bad reputation yet, the truth is, generally calls to the Poison Center about poinsettia plant ingestions do not require any treatment management.
- **Christmas cactus:** This plant is not poisonous, making it the perfect gift.

In gift giving or in buying a plant for the holidays for your home, consider buying a non-toxic plant. (visit our website for a more complete list of toxic plants at www.upstate.edu/forms/documents/F88325.pdf)



Program your cell phone 1-800-222-1222



You just may save a life!

A Poisoning Can Happen to **You!**

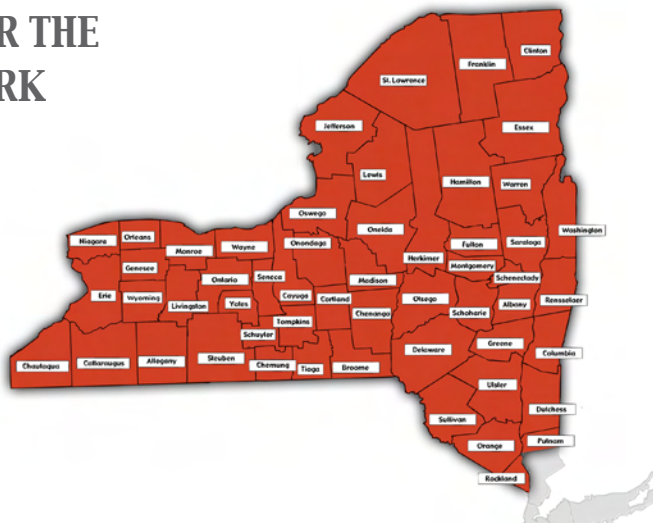


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**SERVICE AREA FOR THE
UPSTATE NEW YORK
POISON CENTER**



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

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Upstate Medical University
750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210
P: 1.800.222.1222 • F: 315.464.7077 • W: upstatepoison.org