

# POISON PREVENTION

## Poisoning Deaths:

- Includes deaths from drugs, medicines, other solid and liquid substances, and gases and vapors.
- Excludes poisonings from spoiled foods, salmonella, and etc..., which are classified as disease deaths.
- 25,300 poisoning deaths in 2006 - Increased 9% over 2005.
- Rated 2nd in causes of death only to motor-vehicle accidents with unintentional deaths in 2006.

## What is a poison?

A poison is anything that can harm someone if it is (1) used in the wrong way, (2) used by the wrong person, or (3) used in the wrong amount. Poisons may harm you when they get in the eyes or on the skin. Other poisons may harm you if you breathe them in or swallow them.

## What are the different forms of poison?

Poison comes in four forms: solids (such as medicine pills or tablets), liquids (such as gasoline), sprays (such as spray cleaners) and gases (such as carbon monoxide, or CO).

## Examples of poisons include:

- Alcohol
- CO gas
- Medicines, such as prescription, over-the-counter, and illegal drugs (Pain killers, cold and cough medicines, vitamins that contain iron, and antibiotics are the most likely to cause poisoning.)
- Food supplements, such as vitamins, minerals, and herbal products
- Personal care products, such as nail polish and nail polish remover, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, mouthwash, hydrogen peroxide, makeup, soap, contact lens solutions, lotions, baby oil, and diaper rash products
- Household chemicals, including bleach, detergent, furniture polish, cleanser, drain and toilet bowl cleaners, antifreeze, gasoline, paints, and varnishes
- Plants, including many house plants and mushrooms
- Bites and stings, including snake and spider bites, and scorpion, wasp, and bee stings
- Hazardous materials
- Environmental chemicals
- Work chemicals

Millions of people are unintentionally poisoned every year. Children ages 6 through 18 account for 13 percent of the exposure and 3 percent of the deaths. Adolescents and teens are being exposed to many sources of potential abuse and poisonings including:

- Illicit drugs;
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications;
- Inhalants

The research also shows a rise in unintentional poisoning by adults who comprise 16 percent of the exposures and 97 percent of the deaths. Some of these poisonings are also from drug abuse, but some have been caused by the interaction of multiple medications. An increasing number of older adults are misusing medications. In 2005, adults older than 60 years of age represented 16 percent of poisoning fatalities reported to poison control centers.

If you think someone has been poisoned, call 1-800-222-1222. **DON'T WAIT** for signs of poisoning. Many poisonings can be avoided with a call to the poison center. Your problem can most likely be solved on the phone. The staff will provide help with any possible poisoning, even if you are not sure a poisoning has occurred.

There are 61 poison centers around the country. If you call 1-800-222-1222, you are connected to the poison center for your area. You will not talk to a national phone operator. **YOU WILL TALK TO A LOCAL EXPERT.** You can talk to an expert any time of day or night, 7 days a week. Call this number from anywhere in the United States.

Iowa-Illinois Safety Council



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