



Published on *British Columbia Drug and Poison Information Centre (BC DPIC)* (<http://www.dpic.org>)

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Poison Information

The BC Poison Control Centre receives over 26,000 telephone calls each year about someone being poisoned. These include accidental and purposeful poisonings, and overdoses.

Poisoning is among the top 3 causes of death from injury in adults, after suicide and ahead of motor vehicle crashes (see the [BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit website](#)). Unintentional poisonings cost British Columbians about \$216 million annually in both direct and indirect costs (for example: hospitalization, work loss).

Many poisonings can be prevented. It only takes a minute to learn about how to prevent a poisoning and what to do if it happens.

The BC Poison Control Centre is available 24-hours every day for advice and information. For suspected poisonings, call 604-682-5050 or 1-800-567-8911.



Children Act Fast...So Do Poisons.

Did you know that...

- The BC Poison Control Centre receives over 70 calls each day about someone being poisoned in British Columbia.
- Over half of all poisonings occur in children younger than 6 years of age.
- Every hour at least one child in British Columbia is poisoned.

- The most common “poisons” in children are cough/cold medicines, pain and fever



medicine, plants and cleaners.

- Most poisonings in children happen just before lunch and before dinner when children are hungry and least supervised.
- “Child-proof” caps are not child-PROOF, they are only child-RESISTANT.
- The BC Poison Control Centre is available 24-hours each day for advice and information.

It only takes a minute to educate yourself about how to prevent a poisoning and what to do if a poisoning occurs.

Put Poison In Its Place

Although young children are at risk for poisoning, half the poisonings in BC involve youth and adults. Many of these cases are unintentional and can be prevented. Every year people are poisoned from medicines and chemicals that have been improperly stored. Many develop toxicity and some are hospitalized.



One typical situation involves a person combining all their

medicines in a weekly container and then taking the wrong pill at the wrong time. Usually these containers are unlabelled which makes pill identification difficult for the poison control centre or the physician.



Another common situation involves a person drinking one to two gulps from a

food or beverage container without realizing beforehand that the “drink” is a chemical. In many cases someone else transfers it from the original container. In some cases the person themselves puts the chemical in the food or drink bottle, and forgets about it until it is too late.

In one year in BC, over 300 people were poisoned from unintentionally ingesting chemicals that had been rebottled into food or drink bottles. Five were hospitalized and 2 died. All of the serious cases involved adolescents or adults. Some of the chemicals that were mistaken for beverages included paint thinner, brake fluid, radiator antifreeze, windshield washer antifreeze, ammonia, and pesticides.

We are grateful to all the First Nations who have cared for and nurtured the lands and waters around us for all time, including the xʷmʷkʷyʷm (Musqueam), Skʷwxʷwʷmesh Uʷxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and sʷlʷilwʷtaʷ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) on whose unceded and ancestral territory our centre is located.

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Source URL (retrieved on 2025-04-04 15:15): <http://www.dpic.org/content/poison-information>