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Poison Prevention Week 2021



Simple habits can prevent poisoning and keep children safe at home

Poison Prevention Week runs March 21 to 27, raising awareness of the poison hazards in our homes. Learn how to prevent poisoning in young children.

Of the 30,000 calls to the BC Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC) in 2020, 35 per cent were about children five years and under.

For this year's National Poison Prevention Week, running March 21 to 27, DPIC is taking part in a campaign to bring awareness to the poison hazards in our home and to the ways we can prevent accidents from happening. This year, the focus is on poison prevention in young children under six years of age.

Many of the calls DPIC receives about children can be prevented with simple habits that keep medication and chemicals away from curious kids.

Common Household Poisons

Many common household products can be poisonous if ingested or splashed on eyes or skin. Medications, cleaning products, small objects (e.g. button batteries, magnets), vitamins, and cosmetics are the most common sources of poisoning in young children.

In 2020, the top 3 substances reported at DPIC for children under six were:

1. Acetaminophen
2. Ibuprofen
3. Hand sanitizers

Other common substances include melatonin, vitamin D, toothpaste with fluoride, and diaper rash products.

The best way to prevent poisonings from medications and common household products is to lock them away, or store them high and far from children.

Medications

Unintentional poisonings from common over-the-counter pain medications, particularly acetaminophen easy-to-swallow tablets have seen a national rise in cases. These medications are particularly attractive to children as they taste sweet and look like candy. Some medications may not come in child-resistant packaging and can be easily opened by children. Although prescription medications are typically sold in child-resistant containers, they too do not keep a child out. A persistent child can open child-resistant caps. Store all medications up and out of sight from children. Unused or expired medication can be returned to any pharmacy for disposal.

Hand Sanitizer

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in hand sanitizer use, calls for hand sanitizer exposures tripled for children under six in 2020. In 2019, there were 105 calls about young children swallowing hand sanitizers or getting it in their eyes, rising to 302 calls in 2020.

Hand sanitizer can be appealing to children as they can smell like food or be packaged in food-like pouches that are easily confused. To prevent unintentional consumption, do not purchase hand sanitizer in fun packaging that is attractive to children. Do not re-bottle hand sanitizer in drink or food containers.

Although hand sanitizer exposures in children have increased, when used appropriately, hand sanitizer is safe to be used on children two and up. Always supervise use in children 6 and under and check product labels to ensure that the product is appropriate for children. Learn more about safe hand sanitizer use in children [here](#).

Edible Cannabis

Edible cannabis exposures in children doubled in 2020 compared to 2019. [Health Canada](#) reported several cases of serious harm from children unintentionally consuming illegal edible cannabis products. Some of these products are packaged like regular candies or foods and have been sources of unintentional consumption. "Cannabis products can look like food or candy and young children and even adults can mistake them for products that are food. Be careful when buying cannabis products and avoid colourful, fun packaging or unlabeled products. And remember to lock them up out of sight.", says DPIC's Clinical Supervisor, Debra Kent. Whether store bought or homemade, clearly label cannabis foods to avoid confusion and unintentional consumption.

Check for Poisons

Many common household products can be hazardous if ingested or exposed to skin or eyes, but prevention is easy. Check your home today for cleaning products, medications, batteries, cannabis products, and personal hygiene products that are easily accessible, and lock them up or store them high and far from children's reach.

Should you suspect your child or someone in your care has been poisoned, **call us 24/7 at 1-800-567-8911 or 604-682-5050** to reach a poison specialist. Our poison centre is staffed by an expert team of nurses and pharmacists who are here to serve

BC and Yukon residents. We are multilingual, fast, and free.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) to learn more and check out the **#CheckForPoisons** hashtag for more tips on how to prevent poisonings in your family.

Download our Poison Checklist [PDF]



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), Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and sʔilwʔtaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) on whose unceded and ancestral territory our centre is located.

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