

POISONS around the home



We often think that children are the ones most likely to be poisoned because they are curious about new things and are not aware of danger. But it can happen to adults and family pets as well. Poisons don't have to be swallowed to do you harm. You can breathe them in through smoke and spray, or splash them in your eyes and on your skin.

When there are adults or older children in the house we often forget about young visitors who may find things in our homes that are harmful. So it's important to know about poisons you're likely to have around the home, and how they should be stored and used so that there is little risk of them causing harm.

Many things we have in and around our homes are poisonous, and very appealing to children.

Medicines:

Pills, liquids, lotions, ointments and inhalers

- Store all medicines in a high cupboard that can be locked
- Do not allow children to take medicines unsupervised
- Ask your pharmacist to put child-resistant caps on your medicine containers
- Follow the instructions on the medicine label and make sure it is only given to the person it was made for
- Follow the instructions on medicines that you buy such as Paracetamol, and do not give more than the maximum number of doses allowed each day
- Try to make sure you are not seen by children when you take medicines. If you are talking with children be careful not to make medicines sound tempting – do not call medicines lollies, sweets or yummy drinks, for example
- Take any medicines that are out of date or are not used to your pharmacist. Do not put them in the rubbish, down the toilet or the sink
- When visitors come, put their bags away where children cannot reach them, as adults often carry medicines in their bags
- Always supervise children taking their own medicines.

Household cleaners and home handyman products:

Disinfectants, bleach, dishwasher powders, kitchen and laundry detergents, other general cleaning products, spot cleaners, drain cleaners and polishes, petrol, paint, paint thinners, fillers and cleaners, pool chemicals

- Store all handyman products and household cleaners (including bleach and dishwashing powder) away from children in cupboards that are locked or have safety catches
- Always try and buy products that come fitted with child-resistant caps
- Keep the door to your dishwasher shut and remove any powder that has not been used or dissolved.

Garden chemicals and products:

Weed and insect sprays and powders, snail or insect bait, mouse and rat bait

- Buy garden chemicals that come fitted with child-resistant caps. Store the containers out of reach of children in a lockable cabinet
- Carefully follow the instructions on the label when mixing and applying the chemical. Wear protective clothing and use protective equipment as well, eg, a face mask and respirator
- Spray only when the air is still
- Ask your local authority about the safest way to dispose of chemicals you no longer need. They should not be poured down the drain.

Personal products:

Shampoo, bubble-bath, cosmetics, insect repellents, hair colours and massage oils

- Store your personal products in a safe place, away from children.

Plants:

- Teach children not to eat plants, berries, roots or flowers from the garden
- Find out about the plants in your garden so that you know which ones are poisonous and which part of the plant contains the poison. Then you are able to teach children to avoid the plant or you may choose to remove it
- Clear away any berries, flowers or other plant materials that fall onto paths or lawns in your garden, so that children are not tempted to taste them.

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Things to remember:

If you think that someone has been poisoned, protect yourself from the poison, then call the National Poisons Centre 0800 POISON or 0800 764 766. Get expert advice before you do anything else.

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Carefully follow the instructions on the label when using poisonous products and wear protective clothing when it is recommended

Keep poisonous products safe in cupboards that have safety catches and are away from food and out of reach of children. Ask your pharmacist to provide bottles with child-resistant caps for your prescription medicines

Buy small amounts of poisonous products, only the amount you need to do the job. This means you won't have to store large amounts of poisons

Dispose of containers that held poisonous products. Do not allow them to be used to store other materials and do not allow children to play with them

Keep all poisonous products in the container that they came in. Don't tip poisons into empty drink bottles or containers that have held food

Whenever possible, buy household products that come fitted with child-resistant caps

Teach children not to eat plants, berries, roots or flowers from the garden

Never leave the lid off a poisonous product you are using. Take out the amount that you need, then put the lid back on straight away

