



Essentials of Community Risk Reduction

Preventing Poisonings Tip Sheet

It is important for people in your community:

- to recognize common poisons
- to know how to prevent poisonings
- to respond appropriately in the event of poisoning.

Share these messages in your presentations and communications to keep them safe.

What is Poisoning:

- Any substance that can harm someone, including medicines, if it is used in the wrong way, by the wrong person, or used in the wrong amount.
- Poisons can be eaten, inhaled, injected, absorbed through the skin, or splashed in the eyes.
- In addition to medicines common poison exposures are to household products, plants, mushrooms, pesticides, animal bites and stings, carbon monoxide, and contaminated food.

Act Fast if a Poisoning Occurs

- The Poison Help number is 1-800-222-1222
- Have the number for the Poison Control Center Helpline easily accessible in your home, in your phone, and at work.
- Call the Poison Control Center for quick help and information.
- If the victim is awake and alert, dial 1-800-222-1222. Try to have this information ready:
 - the victim's age and weight
 - the container or bottle of the poison if available
 - the time of the poison exposure
 - the address where the poisoning occurred
- Stay on the phone and follow the instructions from the emergency operator or poison control center.
- Calls to a Poison Control Center are answered by an expert with special training in toxicology – a nurse, pharmacist or physician.
- **Call 911** if you have a poison emergency and the victim is unconscious, seizing or not breathing.



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Prevent Poisonings

- Teach your family to never touch or put anything in their mouths unless they know what it is.
- Read and follow labels and directions.
- Store these things up, away, and out of sight of children in their original containers, and in cabinets secured with child-resistant locks if possible.
 - All medications and pharmaceuticals, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements
 - Tobacco and e-cigarette products, especially liquid nicotine
 - Alcohol
 - Laundry and cleaning supplies
 - Pesticides and insect repellents
 - Button batteries, such as those found in musical greeting cards, key fobs, etc.
 - Any type of oil or lubricant, including fragrance oils, tiki torch oils, engine oil, etc.
 - Personal care products, especially contact lens disinfectants and hand sanitizers
 - Other chemicals
- Dispose of unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs.
 - Remove medicine from its original container
 - Mix with an unappealing substance like coffee grounds or kitty litter
 - Throw into the household trash
 - Scratch out personal information on the medicine container
- Keep medicines in their original bottles or containers.
- Keep household chemical products in their original bottles or containers. Do not use food containers such as cups, bottles, or jars to store chemical products
- Never mix household products together.
- Wear protective clothing (gloves, long sleeves, long pants, socks, shoes) if you spray pesticides or other chemicals.
- Turn on the fan and open windows when using chemical products such as household cleaners.



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Keep Young Children Safe

- Take extra precautions with medicines and household products:
 - Do not put your next dose of medicine on the counter or table where children can reach them.
 - If you have to do something else while taking medicine, such as answer the phone, take any young children with you.
 - Secure the child safety cap completely every time you use a medicine.
 - After using them, do not leave medicines or household products out. As soon as you are done with them, put them away and out of sight in a cabinet where a child cannot reach them.
 - Be aware of any legal or illegal drugs that guests may bring into your home. Ask guests to store drugs where children cannot find them. Children can easily get into pillboxes, purses, backpacks, or coat pockets.
- Do not call medicine "candy."
- Identify poisonous plants in your house and yard and place them out of reach of children or remove them.
- Always keep detergent containers closed, sealed and stored up high, out of the reach of children. Colorful laundry and dish washer pods are appealing to young children.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Place your detector where it will wake you up if it alarms, such as outside your bedroom. Consider buying a detector with a digital readout. This detector can tell you the highest level of CO concentration in your home in addition to alarming. Replace your CO detector every five years.
- Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors.
- If you smell an odor from your gas appliances, such as a refrigerator, have an expert service it.
- When you buy gas equipment, buy only equipment carrying the seal of a national testing laboratory, such as Underwriters' Laboratories.
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly.
- Have your chimney checked or cleaned every year.
- Never patch a vent pipe with tape, gum, or something else.



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- Never use a gas range or oven for heating.
- Never burn charcoal indoors.
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.
- Have a mechanic check the exhaust system of your car or truck every year.
- Never run your car or truck inside a garage that is attached to a house even with the garage door open.
- If you drive a car or SUV with a tailgate, when you open the tailgate open the vents or windows to make sure air is moving through.
- After a snow storm, clear snow from the tailpipe of your vehicle.

Practice Safe Food Preparation and Handling

- Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods in your grocery bags, in the refrigerator, and while prepping.
- Wash your hands, kitchen surfaces, utensils, and cutting boards frequently, especially after handling or preparing uncooked food and before touching or eating other foods.
- Wash produce but not eggs, meat, or poultry, as washing these can spread harmful bacteria.
- Use the microwave, cold water, or the refrigerator method to defrost your frozen meat or poultry. Do not thaw or marinate these items on the counter, and be sure to cook them immediately after thawing.
- Cook meats to the recommended USDA temperatures: 145 degrees Fahrenheit for pork, beef, lamb, and veal; 160 degrees Fahrenheit for poultry and ground meats.
- Keep hot food hot, and cold food cold.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly – within two hours – at 40° F or below to help reduce the risk of bacterial growth.
- Consume or freeze leftovers within 3-4 days.