



Simple strategies prevent poisoning at home, work

Dr. Kelly L. Forys, Psychologist
U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

The facts on poisons are sobering:

- More than two million poisonings are reported each year to the 61 Poison Control Centers across the country.
- More than 90 percent of these poisonings occur in the home.
- The majority of non-fatal poisonings occur in children younger than 6 years old.
- Poisonings are one of the leading causes of death among adults.

Don't become part of those statistics. Follow some simple strategies to prevent poisonings in your household and work.

Conduct routine safety checks in your home to prevent accidents. It is important to continually evaluate your home for dangerous products and conditions so that you are aware of situations that could be harmful to children, pets and visitors.

Have child safety locks installed on cabinets if you have young children in your home or if there are children who visit your home frequently. This is a simple and inexpensive way to protect the contents of your cabinets from little hands and fingers.

Make sure that potentially dangerous products have child-resistant closures. Even if your cabinets have safety locks, it is important to make each product as child-resistant as possible. Keep dangerous products locked up and stored in high places.

Keep all household products in their original packages. Do not store cleaners in cups, soda bottles, cans or bowls, which children associate with eating and drinking. Original packaging will provide information on the contents, ingredients and first aid information in the event of accidental exposure or ingestion.

Do not let your attention be diverted when using household chemical products, pesticides or cleaning products. If a spillage of any type occurs, clean it up immediately. It only takes a second for a child or a pet to drink a chemical product.

Never take medication or give a child medication in the dark. Many bottles look the same, and it is too easy to grab the wrong bottle.

Check with your physician or Poison Control Center to see if your household and garden plants are poisonous.

Do not use products without a label at work. If a product does not have a label, ask a supervisor or the janitorial staff to identify the product before using it.

Follow product directions. The packaging on products contains valuable information to keep you safe. Medications contain information on proper dosage and drug interactions. Cleaning products indicate instructions detailing how the products should be used, including directions for using proper ventilation.

Remember the great outdoors. Pesticides and fertilizers can be harmful. Use caution when applying them, and make sure that they are stored in a safe place. Also, monitor children and pets if they play in the areas where the pesticides and fertilizers were used.

If a child, adult or pet ingests a potentially poisonous substance, act immediately. **Call the Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.** Keep the number posted for easy access!