Poisoning Accidents

If you have a poisoning emergency, call 1-800-222-1222.
If the victim has collapsed, has difficulty breathing, or is not breathing call 911.

What Is A Poison?
According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, a poison is anything someone eats or drinks (ingestion), breathes (inhalation), gets in the eyes (ocular exposure), or has contact on the skin (dermal exposure), that can cause sickness or death if it gets into or on the body.
Poisons can be found in four forms: solid, liquid, spray or gas. Accidental poisonings occur everyday in the United States and throughout the world. The effects may be minor or may cause life long disabilities or even death.

Persons most at risk for accidental poisonings are: young children; elderly persons who may take many medications and become confused; and persons with disabilities who may not understand the consequences of handling or ingesting toxic amounts of substances. Also at risk are persons who engage in drug, alcohol and inhalant abuse.

Emergency Response To Poisoning
If you suspect poisoning, remain calm.
- If the person has collapsed, has difficulty breathing or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.
- If you suspect household chemical ingestion, follow the first aid instructions on the label of the container and then call the poison control center.
- Call 1-800-222-1222. This is the national hotline number that will reach your nearest poison control center. It can be used anywhere in the United States. Post this number near your phone.
- If you know what substance may be the source of the poisoning, take it or the container it was in, to the phone when you call.
- You will have to give as much information as you can about the incident and the victim. Things to tell the person responding to your call are: age, height, weight and existing health conditions of the victim; as much as you can about the substance involved and the exposure route (swallowed, inhaled, splashed in the eyes, for example); and if the person has vomited.
- Follow the instruction of the poison control center precisely!

What Are Some Common Sources of Poisons?
Medicines and prescription medications are a leading source of accidental overdose. The leading cause of poisoning deaths in children under age six is the ingestion of iron. This is usually in the form of vitamins or nutrition supplements. Household products such as cleaning products, garden supplies and items found in the garage that contain chemicals are another source of poison. Plants found in the yard or in other outside areas may be toxic when ingested. Cosmetics and 1 products such as aftershave lotion can induce a severe reaction when consumed. Alcohol can be
a source of serious poisoning for young children and for persons taking other medications that may interact with the alcohol.

**Creating A Safe Environment**

When there are children or elderly or disabled persons who may not be aware of the danger of poisoning who frequent a home or other environment, there are precautions that should be taken. All environments should be kept as free of toxic substances as possible.

- Store medicines and dangerous products out of sight. Put them away after use. Do not store medicines on a counter or bedside table.
- Do not store leftover chemicals such as paint thinner in cups since cups are thought of as containers for drinks.
- Install child locks on cabinets, if appropriate.
- Obtain Mr. Yuk stickers at a pharmacy and paste them on containers of poisonous items. Teach everyone what Mr. Yuk means.
- Use child resistant packaging and close the package immediately after use.
- Purchase the least hazardous product that will do the job you need.
- Empty ashtrays and pour leftover alcohol out of glasses before going to bed.
- Put a locked cabinet in the garage or outside for storing dangerous products.
- Provide adequate supervision for persons at risk for poisoning.
- Purchase syrup of ipecac and activated charcoal from a pharmacy and keep them in a safe place. If a poisoning occurs, you may be directed to use these products as an antidote. Syrup of ipecac will induce vomiting and activated charcoal will absorb poison and prevent it from spreading throughout the body.
- Teach safe handling techniques to everyone in the environment.

For more information, see the American Association of Poison Control Center's web site at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org).