

Central  
New York  
Regional  
Poison  
Control  
Center

# Poison Prevention Newsletter

## March 2001



UniversityHospital • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

## HOME REMEDIES FOR A COLD

- Drink plenty of clear fluids, preferably 2 to 3 quarts a day.
- Although nothing can cure the common cold, hot drinks such as honey and lemon can be comforting.
- Eat right, get plenty of rest, fresh air, and maintain your activity level, if possible.
- Standing in a hot tub/shower or holding your head downward over a basin of very hot water. Inhale the steam deeply, relieving congestion naturally.
- Cool mist vaporizer may help to clear the respiratory system and sinuses. Using a vaporizer in your bedroom may alleviate your symptoms, so you might sleep better.
- Warm throat gargles and sprays, and/or sucking on throat lozenges or ice chips may help soothe throat irritation.
- Warm packs or cool compresses may provide relief of muscle aches.

## March is POISON PREVENTION MONTH!

### COLD PREPARATIONS

*Nancy O'Neil, RN, CSPI*

Winter is back and so are seasonal colds. Most adults experience two to four colds each year, and most children get six to ten, according to the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). Although there's no cure for the cold, many look to over the counter medications (OTC's) to relieve their symptoms.

Many of these cold products, contain different types of medicines which are intended to treat different symptoms. When you are considering an over the counter cold preparation, we suggest you read the label carefully. As a wise consumer, know what you are taking. Follow the directions, as well as the precautions, on the label. It is also important to know that some people have sensitivities to certain medications. If you develop an unwanted side-effect with a particular medication, note the ingredients for future reference and talk to your doctor about it.

Most over the counter cough and cold preparations contain one or more of the following:

#### Antihistamines

Antihistamines often produce side effects including drowsiness, dizziness and dryness in adults. (It is important to note however, that antihistamines often have the opposite effect in children, producing wakefulness.) Antihistamines can elevate blood pressure and heart rate. These products are designed for immediate, short-term relief. Be aware that if you chose to take an antihistamine to "dry up" your

*Continued on page 2*

**We're always available for both poison emergencies  
and poison information**



**315-476-4766  
1-800-252-5655**

**365 days a year  
24 hours a day  
Call for a telephone sticker**

symptoms, drowsiness will probably be an unwanted side effect with these cold medications. So, be sure not to drive.

### **Decongestants**

Decongestants, such as Sudafed, relieve nasal stuffiness and ear fullness by constricting the blood vessels, therefore, alleviating symptoms of congestion. Like antihistamines, they can elevate blood pressure and heart rate. Unlike antihistamines, decongestants do not cause drowsiness. Instead, they are more likely to produce nervousness or anxiety. As a result, you may choose not to take a decongestant at bedtime. Some adults may choose to take less than the directed amount, even taking only a child's dosage for relief.

### **Combination cold preparation**

A "multi-symptom" or "maximum strength" combination preparation will contain an analgesic, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol-type product), aspirin or ibuprofen. It might even contain a cough suppressant. Analgesics are meant to reduce fever and general body aches associated with cold and flu. Excessive and/or prolonged intake of a high-dose of acetaminophen can damage the liver. Risks of drug interactions are increased with usage of combination products. Single-drug cold formulations are usually a better choice than combination products that may contain unnecessary ingredients. Additionally, they may contain a less effective dosage of the individual active ingredient that your cold symptoms require. Read and follow label directions and choose carefully.

## **POISON PREVENTION:**

For copies of this newsletter, or for more information about poison prevention materials and programs, please contact CNYPCC Health Educator, at 315-464-5375.

### **Cough suppressant**

A common over the counter cough suppressant ingredient is dextromethorphan, which treats the discomfort of a dry, hacking cough. Dextromethorphan is not to be used by persons on some anti-depressants, including the herbal, St. John's Wort. All forms of Robitussin, for example, contain dextromethorphan.

So, if you decide to take an over-the-counter medication for your cold, the Poison Control Center recommends:

- Read and follow label directions and precautions.
- If you are on high blood pressure medication, consult your doctor first before taking a cold medication.
- Do not take any OTC cold product for more than 7 days.
- If you have questions, call the Poison Center.
- The Poison Center is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## **PPA WARNING**

*Gail Banach, MS,Ed, Director of Education*

Until recently phenylpropanolamine, or PPA, was considered to be a safe substance, found in both prescription and over-the-counter nasal decongestants and appetite suppressants. In May of 2000, the FDA suggested that manufacturing and the use of PPA should be "voluntarily discontinued". This decision was based on a study that found PPA to increase the chances of stroke. The new study showed that women were at more risk of developing strokes after only 3 day's use of an appetite suppressant containing 75 mg of PPA. Additionally, data indicated a possible risk associated with even one day's use of a PPA-based nasal decongestant spray. The Central New York Poison Control Center recommends that, as with any medication, be aware of all warnings and precautions before taking.

# How You Can Prevent Poisonings

1. Store all drugs and chemicals in the containers in which you buy them and out of the reach of children.
2. Never put chemicals in food containers (e.g., never put bleach in a drinking glass or gasoline in a soda bottle).
3. Never call medicine candy.
4. Use products with safety caps. Make sure the tops are on tightly after use.
5. Read and follow label directions on all products before using them.
6. Dispose of "extra" or outdated medicine by flushing it down the toilet.
7. Keep the phone number of the Poison Control Center on or near your telephone. Call if you have a problem or question.

## March Poison Prevention Month Highlights

March 5, in Oswego, NY six agencies will be recognized for their dedicated contributions to outreach efforts at the CNYPCC. Included will be the Oswego County Children's Bureau, Oswego County Cooperative Extension, Oswego BOCES, Oswego Nurse/Teachers' Association, Oswego County Health Department and Oswego Hospital. Mayor John Gosek will sign a proclamation, heralding March as Poison Prevention Month in Oswego.

March 22, the CNYPCC will be holding an Open House at the Center. Mayor Roy Bernardi and County Executive Nick Pirro will proclaim March as Poison Prevention Month in Onondaga County. The Upstate Medical University Community will be invited to attend the proclamation signing and tour the Poison Control Center.

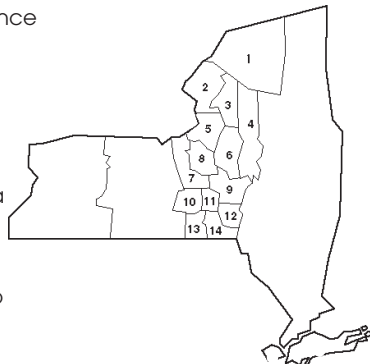
Internet Access to the Central New York Poison Control Center web site will be one of the highlights of the month. Our gratitude to Carol Ceraldi of Medical Illustrations and Larry Polly of IMT, for their hard work and patience in getting this site up and running.

SUNNY 102 Radio personality, Bill Baker, will feature "Poison Conundrum" on his morning show, "Awake With Bake". Morning listeners will be asked to answer trivia questions with a "poison" theme. The winners will be awarded one copy of "Poison Awareness", an educational program on CD-ROM, for kids of all ages.

Local pharmacies, including Kinney Drugs and K-Mart Pharmacies will be distributing poison prevention materials to their customers during the month of March.

## Service Area of the CNY Poison Control Center

1. St. Lawrence
2. Jefferson
3. Lewis
4. Herkimer
5. Oswego
6. Oneida
7. Cayuga
8. Onondaga
9. Madison
10. Tompkins
11. Cortland
12. Chenango
13. Tioga
14. Broome



A Service of the  
State University of New York  
Upstate Medical University  
at University Hospital, Syracuse.  
A Member of the  
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Poison Control Centers

*Billie, our poison prevention hero, recommends:*

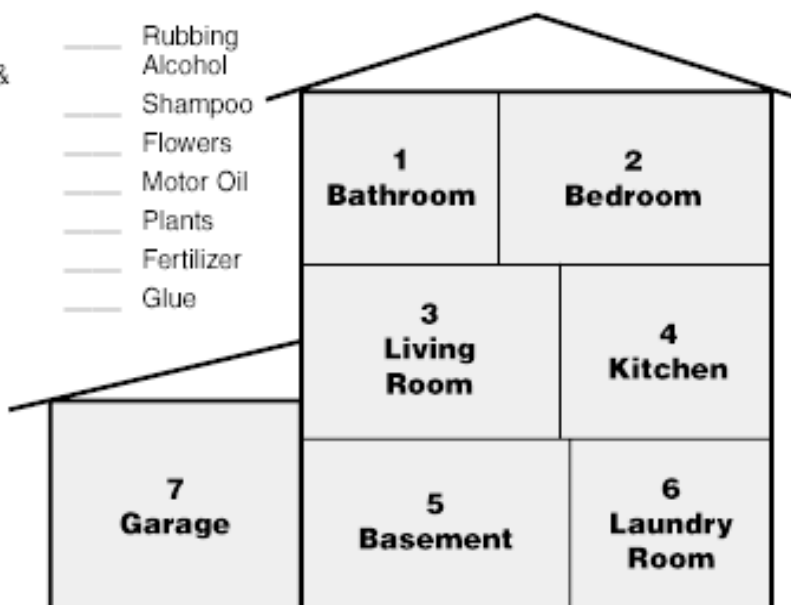
# POISON SAFETY FOR YOUR HOME

Did you know that 'good' products used the wrong way can be poisonous?



Listed below are some poisonous items you might find in your home. In which room would you find each of these? Mark the room number on the line next to each item.

- |                                  |                           |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ___ Vitamins                     | ___ Antifreeze            | ___ Rubbing Alcohol |
| ___ Dish Soap                    | ___ Nail Polish & Remover | ___ Shampoo         |
| ___ Mouse Bait                   | ___ Alcoholic Beverage    | ___ Flowers         |
| ___ Mothballs                    | ___ Medicine              | ___ Motor Oil       |
| ___ Ant Traps                    | ___ Cigarettes            | ___ Plants          |
| ___ Toothpaste                   | ___ Deodorant             | ___ Fertilizer      |
| ___ Peroxide                     | ___ Powder                | ___ Glue            |
| ___ Oven Cleaner                 | ___ Furniture Polish      |                     |
| ___ Pesticides                   | ___ Bleach                |                     |
| ___ Laundry Soap                 | ___ Gasoline              |                     |
| ___ Windshield Washer Fluid      | ___ Cosmetics             |                     |
| ___ Perfume, Cologne, Aftershave |                           |                     |



*Now that you have found the poisons in your home, be poison safe!*



Check the box below when you can say that the statement is true.

In my house we:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put all poisons out of reach          | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure all products are in their original containers          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use safety tops                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Know where to find the phone number of the Poison Control Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure all tops are tightly closed |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use safety locks                      |   |

