



# Poison Prevention

Newsletter

July 2003

 SUNY Upstate Medical University  
**University Hospital** • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

## Arsenic Danger

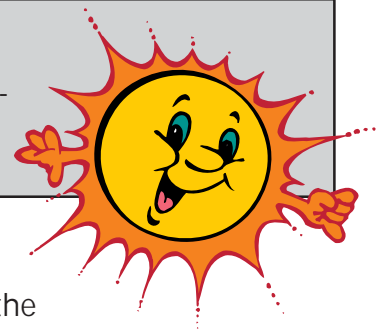
Pressure-treated wood is widely used to build decks, fences, posts, picnic tables, docks and playground equipment. The wood preservation most commonly used in this process (estimated to be as high as 90%) is CCA, or chromated copper arsenic. Arsenic is on the Environmental Protection Agency's list of chemicals known, without question, to cause cancer in humans.

The process injects CCA into the wood to preserve it from dry rot, fungus, termites and other pests. When ingested (hand to mouth behavior) or inhaled, arsenic is taken into the body. Arsenic can also leach into soil. People may be unaware of this exposure as this toxic metal is tasteless, colorless and odorless. Typically, the amount of arsenic ingested or inhaled and the length of the exposure determine the potential risk for arsenic toxicity. The National Research Council found that children are particularly vulnerable as they are not able to metabolize arsenic into less toxic forms as adults can.

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## Summer Safety

Now that summer is here, the poison center reminds you to be on the lookout for seasonal poisonings.



## Sun Poisoning

It is easy to underestimate how powerful the sun's rays are and the dangers that exist from overexposure. If you are a sun worshiper you probably think that having a tan makes you look healthier. But be aware of the long-term damages like skin damage and cancer. Additionally, some people are more sensitive to sunlight than others and develop an allergic reaction to exposure to the sun. This reaction is commonly referred to as "Sun Poisoning".

### What causes it

The sun's rays that damage your skin, are ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B rays (UVA and UVB rays). Exposure to these rays over time can cause irreversible damage to your skin. The "tanning effect" is the body way of trying to protect itself from the harmful rays. When overexposure occurs the result is a burn. When an allergic reaction occurs the result is blotchy red patches, they are also referred to as "Hives". Hives are a sign of high histamine levels.

### What to look for

If you have sun poisoning you will notice blotchy red patches on exposed skin that itch and burn. In more severe cases bumps or blisters will develop. Scratching causes them to open, spreading the poison to other parts of the body.

### Treatment options

Medications are available over-the-counter and with a prescription.

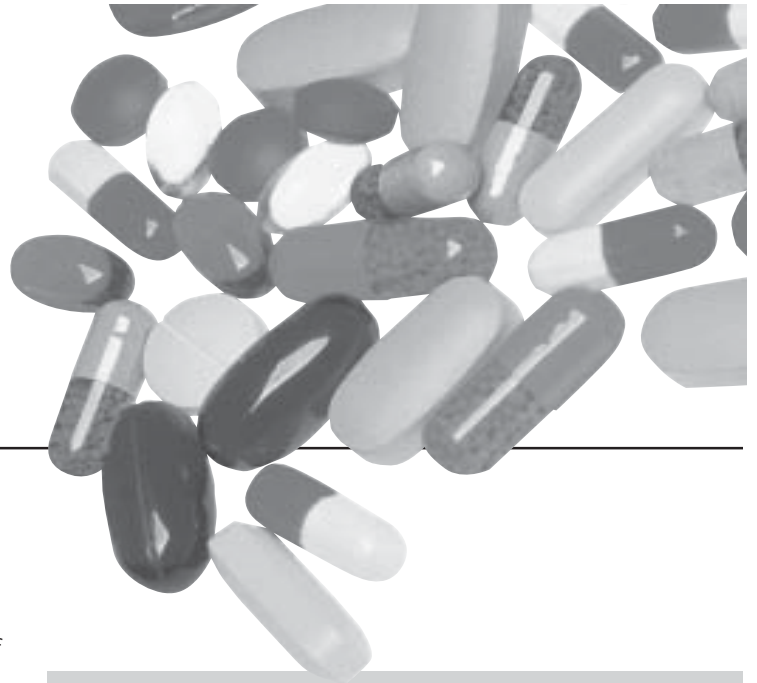
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Poison emergency?  
Poison information?  
Call Us!  
Visit us on the web:  
[www.cnypoison.org](http://www.cnypoison.org)

## Did you know?

The medications you are taking may increase your chances of sunburn. Many medications can increase your skin's sensitivity to sunlight. The more sensitive you are, the greater your chance of getting sunburned. Some common medications that can increase sensitivity include thiazide and some other diuretics, tetracycline and sulfa antibiotics, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen.



## Going on Vacation? Take Us with You

Whether you are planning a trip to another part of the country or just a weekend get away, take the number of the Poison Center with you. Most poisonings are accidents and nobody plans on accidents happening, but you can be prepared just in case. Program your cell phone and write the number for the poison center in your address book. By dialing **1-800-222-1222** from anywhere in the country your call will be routed to the closest poison center. If you are using a cell phone, your call will be routed to the Poison Center closest to that phone's local calling area. Remember for an emergency or information, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, we are just a phone call away.

## Sun Poisoning

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Antihistamine or hydrocortisone have proven to be effective in reducing the swelling and itching. However be aware that hydrocortisone is a steroid and large or extended doses can cause unwanted side effects. You should always consult with your doctor before taking any medications.

### How to protect yourself

- Limit your time in the sun
- Avoid the sun, during 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This is when the sun's rays are the strongest
- Wear protective clothing such a hat and sunglasses
- Check your skin every month for signs of skin damage
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher

## How Safe are Tanning Booths?

Tanning booths have become popular as a convenient way to prepare for a vacation or to maintain an existing tan. Some manufactures of tanning booths claim that they use "harmless" UVA rays. However, both UVA and UVB rays cause skin damage. Although, the effects of UVA rays may take longer than UVB rays, the UVA rays go deeper into the skin than UVB rays thus causing the same long-term damage as direct exposure to sunlight.

VISIT US ON THE WEB

[WWW.CNYPPOISON.ORG](http://WWW.CNYPPOISON.ORG)

You can now visit us on the web. The Central New York Poison Center's web site is a wealth of information. Get the facts on poison tips, education, and more.

We offer educational opportunities with Train-the-trainer programs designed for teachers, healthcare professionals and childcare providers. You can download our ABC's of teaching poison prevention and begin today!

All of our educational materials are in a (pdf) format for easy downloading and reproducing. You can catch up on back issues of our newsletter "Poison Prevention" too!

While you are there take our site survey and let us know how you liked the site. We are always looking for valuable feedback and suggestions for improvement.

# The Medicine Cabinet

With the change of seasons comes a chance to clean out the medicine cabinet. Look at the label of all prescriptions and over the counter medicines and check the expiration date. Once a product is opened the exposure to light, air and environmental conditions can reduce its effectiveness. Take time today to properly discard old medications, ointments and other first aid products. Properly discarding unwanted medications can reduce the risk of poisoning.



## Arsenic Danger

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Additionally, people with poor nutrition may be more susceptible to this health-related problem.

On February 12, 2002, EPA announced "a voluntary decision by the lumber industry to move consumer use of treated lumber products away from CCA pressure-treated wood by December 31, 2003". As of January 1, 2004, the lumber industry will not be allowed to use CCA to treat wood intended for residential settings.

When working with CCA treated wood, take the following precautions

- If you don't know, test to see if wood is treated with CCA (see below\*)
- If replacement is not an immediate option, be sure to treat the wood at least every two years with a waterproof sealant. More often if in a high traffic area
- Don't burn wood treated with CCA, as toxic levels of CCA may be inhaled
- Dispose of lumber through normal trash collection
- Take precautions, like a mask, if cutting the wood, as sawdust may be inhaled
- Remember to wash hands after contact. Clothes should be washed separately in soap and water.
- If you are building, don't use wood treated with CCA, find an alternative.

Other building materials such as redwood, cedar, plastic and composite materials are recommended for residential use and for playgrounds. Check with your lumberyard for wood treated with an alternative preservative.

\*Test kits can be ordered through Healthy Building Networks at [www.healthybuilding.net](http://www.healthybuilding.net). Click on the "About Us" link. In the bottom right hand corner find "transform the pressure treated wood industry" link. At the bottom of this page is a link with ordering instructions.

Or order the kit by sending a check for \$20 per kit to: The Healthy Building Network, 2425 18th St., NW, Washington, DC 20009-2096.

Make the check payable to "ILSR," and specify whether you would like the test kit for wood or soil.

The kit include instructions and all the materials you will need to take one sample, including a pre-paid mailer for shipping the sample back to the lab for analysis. Results will be sent back to you with instructions for interpretation.

***Suggested topics for our newsletter can be submitted to:***



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A black silhouette of a mosquito is positioned in the upper left corner of the page. The mosquito is shown from a top-down perspective, with its long proboscis pointing towards the right. Its wings are spread out, and its legs are visible. The silhouette is set against a light gray background that is part of a larger graphic element.

## Watch out for the things that bug you

Experts estimate that if you have an allergic reaction to the venom of one insect or animal, you have a sixty percent chance of being allergic to other insects or animals as well. If you experience an allergic reaction to an insect or animal bite keep a record of your symptoms and the medications you used to treat the exposure. This will help the pharmacist or doctor in the treatment of new exposures. Be sure to tell any new physician about any allergic reaction.