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|  |  | <b>Upstate<br/>New York<br/>Poison<br/>Center</b> |
| <b>1-800-222-1222</b>   |   |   |

# Poison Prevention

## Newsletter Fall 2006

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

### Children's Vinyl Lunch Boxes Can Contain Dangerous Levels of Lead

For the past two years, The Center for Environmental Health has been testing lunchboxes for lead, when it was discovered vinyl lunchboxes were exceeding the acceptable level of 600 parts per million (ppm). One lunchbox, identified as the Angela Anaconda lunchbox made by Targus International was almost 100 times over the legal limit.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Center for Environmental Health have contacted manufacturers of children's lunchboxes to notify them of their findings and to urge them to refrain from marketing such lead containing lunchboxes. Due to this cooperative effort, there are fewer lunchboxes on the store shelves that contain lead.

Lead is a serious health problem. Traditionally, most lead exposures are a result of chipped paint ingestions from older homes that contained lead based paint. Children ingest the paint chips from surfaces that have cracked or peeling paint. Reports to Poison Centers now indicate that lead exposures can also come from children's jewelry, toys,

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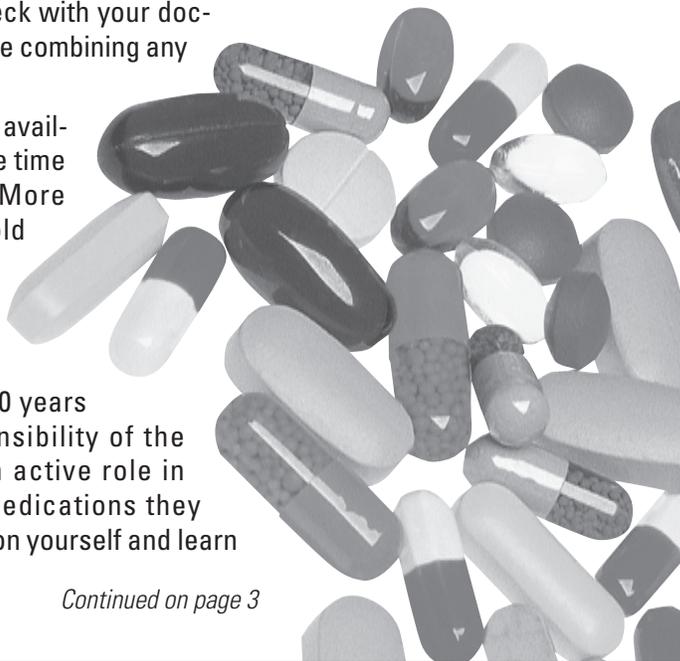
### Drug Interactions

## Prescriptions and Over-the-Counter Medications

Household medicine cabinets often contain a variety of prescriptions and over-the-counter medications (OTC's). Prescription drugs are licensed medicines regulated by law that require a prescription before purchase. Non prescription or over-the-counter drugs are medicines that the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) determines are safe and effective for public use without a prescription and therefore, are sold "over-the-counter". Many OTC's contain the same active ingredient found in prescription medications. Acetaminophen, for example, an OTC that relieves pain and reduces fever, can be found in many prescription medications such as cough & cold preparations. When prescription medication containing acetaminophen is combined with an OTC containing acetaminophen, there is a risk of multi-dosing or getting more than the daily-recommended dosage of that active ingredient. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before combining any medications.

Many OTC products available today were at one time prescription drugs. More than 700 products sold over-the-counter today use the ingredients or dosage strength available only by prescription 30 years ago. It is the responsibility of the consumer to take an active role in understanding the medications they are taking. To education yourself and learn

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|  |  | <b>Upstate<br/>New York<br/>Poison<br/>Center</b> | <b>Poison emergency?<br/>Poison information?<br/>Call Us!<br/>Visit us on the web:<br/><a href="http://www.upstatepoison.org">www.upstatepoison.org</a></b> |
| <b>1-800-222-1222</b>   |   |   |   |

## The Medicine Cabinet

# Iron Poisoning with Multi-Vitamins

Iron poisoning occurs when a person, most often a child, ingests several pills containing iron. Prenatal vitamins, as well as multi vitamins that are fortified with minerals, contain iron. Prenatal vitamins are especially dangerous to children because of the high level of iron. Depending on the age and weight of the victim and quantity of prenatal vitamins ingested, a child may need immediate medical attention.

Medicine looks like candy and children often can't tell the difference between them. Children's multi-vitamins are often fruit or candy flavored. They are marketed as gum-balls, gummy bears, or cartoon characters making it more difficult to reinforce the message that medicine is not candy. Unfortunately, when a young child ingests a medication, he or she is often incapable of assessing or communicating the amount ingested, which can complicate the problem. Additionally, a child may not show any signs or immediate symptoms. The only clue might be an empty bottle or package of vitamins or pills left behind. If you even think that an ingestion has occurred, call your Poison Center immediately at 1-800-222-1222. Remember to bring the bottle or package with you so that you can give specific product information. Poison Information Specialists will be glad to help you.

## Poisonous Plants in the News

An unintentional toxic exposure involving a moonflower plant was reported in the national news recently. The story involved two teenagers who decided to ingest the seeds from the plant. The teens had found a website claiming that when ingested, the seeds of the moonflower plant would cause a hallucinogenic affect. What they got instead was a trip to the emergency room.

The moonflower plant or its botanical name *Datura Innoxia* is a poisonous plant, which causes adverse reaction or affect when people or animals are exposed to it. Most plant calls to a Poison Center are unintentional exposures involving a minimal amount, such as a toddler tasting a part of a household plant, or an adult questioning whether pits, seeds, flowers, or flowers of plants are toxic or not. Most plant calls are non-toxic exposures.

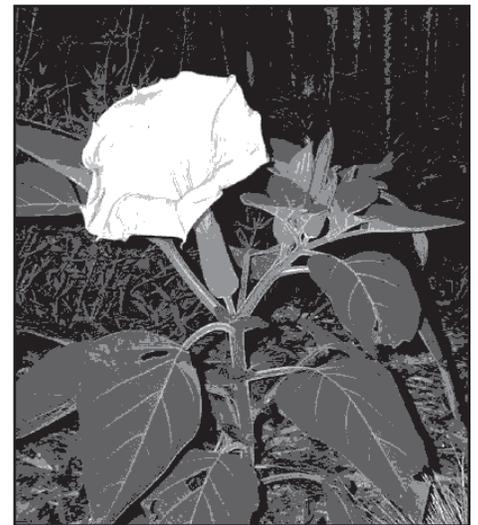
### Here are some guidelines to prevent plant poisonings:

- Keep the household plants out of the reach of children and pets
- Make a list of plants inside and outside of your home in order to identify the plant if an exposure should occur
- When possible, find the botanical name of the plant, as often there are many varieties, some which may be poisonous
- Do not eat any part of a plant that you cannot identify

It can be easy to confuse poisonous with non-poisonous plants. Often times, while one part of a plant might be edible, another part might be toxic. If you can't tell the difference between poisonous and non-poisonous, don't eat it. Additionally, animals and humans react differently to plants, so just because an animal eats a plant doesn't mean that it is safe for humans and the opposite is true as well.

Some people have been unintentionally poisoned by mistakenly using the wrong plant or using a plant in a way that it is not intended to be used. Some plants like Aloe can be used for topical treatment, but can be harmful if ingested. Washing or cooking a poisonous plant will not destroy the toxins. The roots, leaves and berries will still contain the same toxic properties.

Following the simple rules as listed above will help reduce the risk of poisoning. However, if you think someone may have been exposed to a poisonous plant or you have questions, call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Poison Information Specialists are happy to help with plant calls. However, it is essential that you know the name of the plant before you call, as plants cannot be identified over the telephone.



## Children's Vinyl Lunch Boxes Can Contain Dangerous Levels of Lead

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lunchboxes and other products marketed to children.

It is not possible to tell by appearance whether a vinyl lunch box may contain lead. Therefore, it is advised to avoid vinyl lunch boxes altogether. If buying a vinyl lunchbox, look for "lead-free" labels on vinyl lunchboxes as an assurance of product safety. If you already own a vinyl lunch box you can test it for lead by purchasing a hand-held lead testing kit. The kits can be purchased either on-line at [www.testyourlunchbox.com](http://www.testyourlunchbox.com) or [www.leadcheck.com](http://www.leadcheck.com). You can also check with your local hardware store for the lead testing kit.

If you think your child has been exposed to lead, get him/her tested. A blood test is the only definitive way to test for lead poisoning. Contact your pediatrician to schedule the test. For more information on lead poisoning contact your county health department or the Lead Poisoning Resource Center in your area.

For more information on lead in lunchboxes you can contact The Center for Environmental Health at 1-800-652-0827 or visit their website at [www.cehca.org](http://www.cehca.org).



## Prescriptions and Over-the-Counter Medications

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more about OTC medications, follow these simple steps:

- Read the label
- Look for the active ingredient
- Follow the directions
- Read the warnings
- Ask questions of you physician or pharmacist

When it comes to taking medications, more does not mean better. Avoid misuse or abuse of OTC medications by taking them longer or in higher doses than the label recommends. Taking more than one medication at a time can cause an adverse reaction and a possible overdose. Consult with your physician or your pharmacist when taking any medication. If symptoms persist, be sure to see your doctor.



## www.upstatepoison.org

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



# CALLING AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



A Service of the State University of  
New York Upstate Medical University at  
University Hospital, Syracuse.

## Unintentional Poisoning Can Happen To You..At Any Age!

To receive your **FREE** telephone stickers, magnets, and information brochures, dial 1-800-222-1222 ask for the Health Educator at The Upstate New York Poison Center.