



[www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org)

**50 YEARS**

# Poison Prevention

Newsletter

December 2007

University Hospital • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

## What should parents know about using cough and cold products?

Do not use cough and cold products with children under 2 years of age UNLESS given specific directions to do so by a healthcare provider.

Do not give children medicine that is packaged and made for adults. Use only products marked for use with babies, infants or children (sometimes called "pediatric" use).

Cough and cold medicines come in many different strengths. If you are unsure about the right product for your child, ask a healthcare provider.

If other medicines (over-the-counter or prescription) are being given to a child, the child's healthcare provider should review and approve their combined use.

*Continued on page 2*

## Lead Poisoning - Buyer Beware

Lead is a heavy metal and a toxin (poison) that can harm young children. Children 6 years old and under are most at risk as their bodies are still developing. Exposure to lead can cause learning and behavioral problems with the possibility of damage to the brain, kidneys, and other organs.

Before the risk to young children was known lead was used in many materials and products such as lead-based paints, lead solder used in plumbing, and leaded gasoline. Although U.S. laws now prevent lead from being used in many products, there are still lead hazards in and around many homes.

2007 was a banner year for products imported to the United States found to contain lead. Although the media reports focused on toys the reality is the number of products imported that possibly could contain lead is increasing. Everything from toys, jewelry, ceramics and school supplies to everyday household products are now under investigation for potential lead exposures.

This obvious health concern has prompted consumers to take precautions to protect themselves with the purchase of home lead testing kits. Two reputable agencies Consumer Reports and Consumer Product Safety Commission are not in agreement with their interpretation as to the credibility of home lead testing kits. Most of these lead testing kits can only detect lead at the surface or where "accessible". Lead can be embedded below the surface.

To be safe the Upstate New York Poison Center recommends that you regularly check the Consumer Product Safety Commission recall list (a link is provided below). If you are concerned about other specific items in your home, especially if you have small children lead test kits might be a useful tool. If testing produces a positive result it might have lead. However, a negative result is no guarantee that the item is lead free.

### Here are some important links for more information.

- Lead Program in New York State visit <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/>
- Consumer Reports <http://blogs.consumerreports.org/safety/2007/10/testing-the-lead.html>
- For a list of recalled items visit <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prerel.html>

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



[www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org)

**50 YEARS**



# Do You Know About Herbal and Dietary Supplements?

## What is a dietary supplement?

A dietary supplement is a product taken by mouth that contains a “dietary ingredient” intended to supplement the diet. Dietary supplements can be extracts or concentrates, and may be found in many forms such as tablets, capsules, softgels, gelcaps, liquids, powders or bar. The information on their label must not represent the product as a conventional food or a sole item of a meal or diet. Whatever their form, dietary supplements are in a special category under the general umbrella of “foods,” not drugs, and requires that they be labeled a dietary supplement.

## What is a “dietary ingredient” in a dietary supplement?

In order for an ingredient of a dietary supplement to be a “dietary ingredient,” it must be one or any combination of the following substances:

- a vitamin,
- a mineral
- an herb or other botanical
- an amino acid
- a dietary substance for human use to supplement a diet by increasing the total dietary intake (e.g., enzymes or tissues from organs or glands)
- a concentrate, metabolite, constituent or extract

## Who is responsible for the claims made about dietary supplements?

The manufacture is responsible for determining that the dietary supplements it manufactures or distributes are safe

and that any representations or claims made about them are substantiated by adequate evidence that they are not false or misleading. This means that dietary supplements do not need approval from FDA before they are marketed and manufacturers do not need to register with FDA before producing or selling. Currently, there are no FDA regulations that are specific to dietary supplements that establish a minimum standard of practice for manufacturing dietary supplements.

## Must all ingredients be declared on the label of a dietary supplement?

Yes, ingredients not listed on the “Supplement Facts” panel must be listed in the “other ingredient” statement beneath the panel.

## Who has the responsibility for ensuring that a dietary supplement is safe?

The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that its dietary supplement products are safe before they are marketed. Unlike drug products that must be proven safe and effective for their intended use before marketing, there are no provisions in the law for FDA to “approve” dietary supplements for safety or effectiveness before they reach the consumer. Also unlike drug products, manufacturers and distributors of dietary supplements are not currently required by law to record, investigate or forward to FDA any reports they receive of injuries or illnesses that may be related to

*Continued on page 4*

---

## What should parents know about using cough and cold products?

*Continued from page 1*

Read all of the information in the “Drug Facts” box on the package label so that you know the active ingredients and the warnings.

Follow the directions in the “Drug Facts” box. Do not give a child medicine more often or in greater amounts than is stated on the package.

Too much medicine may lead to serious and life-threatening side effects, particularly in children aged 2 years and younger.

For liquid products, parents should use the specific measuring device (dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon) that is packaged with the product to deliver the recommended dose. A kitchen teaspoon or tablespoon is not an appropriate measuring device for giving medicines to children.

If a measuring device is not included with the product, parents should purchase one at the pharmacy. Make sure that the dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon has markings on

it that match the dosing that is in the directions in the “Drug Facts” box on the package label, or is recommended by the child’s health care provider.

If you DO NOT UNDERSTAND the instructions on the product, or how to use the dosing device (dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon), DO NOT USE the medicine. Consult your healthcare provider if you have questions or are confused.

Cough and cold medicines only treat the symptoms of the common cold such as runny nose, congestion, fever, aches, and irritability. They do not cure the common cold.

If a child’s condition worsens or does not improve, stop using the product and immediately take the child to a health care provider for evaluation.

A copy of the FDA’s August 15 Public Health Advisory may be obtained at:

[http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/cough\\_cold.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/cough_cold.htm)

# Poison Prevention Tips for the Winter and Holiday Season

As the winter weather approaches and the holiday festivities begin it is important to remember that there is an increased risk for poisoning. These are some steps you can take to prevent poisoning.

## Carbon Monoxide (CO)

CO is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless poisonous gas that comes from carbon containing burning fuels. To prevent CO poisoning:

- Have a Heating professional check and clean your furnace every year.
- Make sure the Heating professional checks for proper airflow and ventilation.
- Never use an oven or gas range for home heating, and do not bring propane grills indoors for cooking.
- Do not leave a fire burning in the fireplace or run a space heater while you are sleeping.
- Install CO detectors in your home and check the batteries at least every six months.

## Plants and Decorations

Holiday decorations can be hazardous for children. Children may be drawn to eat certain colorful holiday plants, or to put other colorful decorative items in their mouths. Prevention tips include:

- Keep ornamental plants such as Holly, Mistletoe, and Jerusalem Cherry out of the reach of children. They can be poisonous if swallowed.
- Snow globes may develop bacteria in the water, or contain a more toxic ethylene glycol (antifreeze). Bubble lights contain Methylene Chloride and it toxic if ingested.
- Lead could be found in holiday lights and plastic decorations. To avoid lead exposure, do not allow children to put these items in their mouths, and wash their hands often.

## Medication

The winter season is a time when more medications, such as cough remedies and antibiotics, are used in the home.

Some simple steps you can take to prevent medication poisoning are:

- Keep medicine out of the reach of children.
- Do not mix medicines, exceed dosages, or use other people's medicines.
- Read your medication labels and be aware of any warnings about possible side effects (e.g., drowsiness).
- Avoid alcohol consumption while taking prescription or over-the-counter medications.

For more information about poison prevention tips please visit our website at [www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org)

If you suspect someone has been poisoned, call the Upstate New York Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Sources: Upstate New York Poison Center, Regional Poison Center for Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Jacksonville Poison Information Center.



# Do You Know About Herbal and Dietary Supplements?

Continued from page 2

the use of their products. Under DSHEA, Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, once the product is marketed, FDA has the responsibility for showing that a dietary supplement is "unsafe," before it can take action to restrict the product's use or removal from the marketplace.

## Why do some supplements have wording (a disclaimer)?

The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and truthfulness of these claims; they are not approved by FDA. For this reason, the law says that if a dietary supplement label includes such a claim, it must state in a "disclaimer" that FDA has not evaluated this claim. The disclaimer must also state that this product is not intended to "diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease," because only a drug can legally make such a claim.

## How can I, my health care provider, or any informed individual report a problem or illness caused by a dietary supplement to FDA?

If you think you have suffered a serious harmful effect or illness from a product FDA regulates, including dietary supplements, the first thing you should do is contact or see your healthcare provider immediately. Then, you and your health care provider are encouraged to report this problem to FDA.

### **NOTE: The identity of the reporter and/or patient is kept confidential.**

For a general, not serious, complaint or concern about food products, including dietary supplements, you may contact the consumer complaint coordinator at the local FDA District Office nearest you. See the following Web address for the telephone number: <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/backgrounders/complain.html>.

## 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.



Upstate New York Poison Center  
750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210