



www.upstatepoison.org

50 YEARS

Poison Prevention

Newsletter

December 2009

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

Preventing Poisoning in the Winter

Poisonings happen year round, but in the winter along with the cold weather comes the potential for unintentional poisonings such as carbon monoxide, medication exposures and holiday hazards.

The Poison Center encourages everyone to take the necessary precautions to keep you and your family safe.

- Check to make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries and are in proper working order
- Throw out any old and outdated medicines in your medicine cabinet
- Keep all medications up and out of the reach of children
- Read the label on all prescription and over-the-counter medications to know what the active ingredients are and proper dosing
- Remember to keep alcohol and tobacco products out of the reach of children and pets
- Have the number for the Poison center readily available in the event that you need to call

Remember the Poison Center is available 24/7/365 someone is always available to answer your call. If you need a telephone sticker or magnet with the number of the Poison Center call 1-800-222-1222 and we will mail some to you. For more information visit our website at www.upstatepoison.org.

Proper Dosing of Acetaminophen to Children and Infants

When children and infants get sick often the first symptoms are pain and a fever. To relieve these symptoms, the product most often recommended is acetaminophen.

There are different forms, strengths and doses of acetaminophen depending on age and weight. Children's and infants' over-the-counter medicines are different and it is important that you use the proper one for your child. Acetaminophen comes in liquid, pill, capsule, tablet and suppositories.

Infant medicines are more concentrated than children's—as much as three times more drug per drop than children's formulas. So if you give infants' medicine to a child using anything other than the dropper that came with the product, which allows you to be very precise, you increase the risk of accidentally giving too much medication.

It is important to always use the measuring device that comes in the package in insure proper dosing. Using devices from other products or household measuring cups, spoons or utensils increases the risk of dosing errors as these items vary in size. The Poison Center recommends that you consult your primary doctor or pharmacist for the best product and dose for your child.

Remember that many over-the counter and prescription medicines have acetaminophen in them. If you are using more than one product during the same 24 hour period, check the listed ingredients in all products to avoid an unintentionally giving too much acetaminophen.

Key Points to remember:

- Never give acetaminophen to a baby under the age of 3 months without talking to your doctor first.
- Age is a rough guide, so the proper dosage for your child is based on weight, not age.
- Read the label. It's easy to get confused by the different forms and concentrations of acetaminophen available (see above article). You don't want to confuse teaspoons with tablespoons, or give a baby the same type of medicine you'd give a toddler.
- Use the measuring device that comes with the medicine, whether it's a dropper or a measuring cup. Don't use the kitchen teaspoon or tablespoon.
- Never give your child acetaminophen along with another medication unless directed by his doctor. If you do, you might mistakenly give him more than one dose. Overdoses are common and can be dangerous.
- Follow the manufacturers warning and call your doctor if your child's pain gets worse or lasts for more than 5 day's or his fever gets worse or lasts for more than 3 day's.

If you think that your child has taken too much acetaminophen immediately call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Sources: <http://www.babycenter.com>, <http://www.tylenol.com>, <http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/usefultools/l/bltylenoldsgcal.htm>

Protect Yourself and Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

In spite of the numerous warnings of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning, more than 500 people accidentally die from carbon monoxide each year in the United States. In addition it is estimated that thousands of people are exposed to non-lethal levels of CO poisoning.

CO is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning any fuel. Many people who have CO poisoning don't know it because its symptoms are mistaken for common flu and cold ailments. Common symptoms of CO poisoning include: headache, dizziness, chest pain, and nausea/vomiting.

Most accidental CO poisonings occur during the winter months from December through February. This is the time when households increase their usages of heating sources that produce hazardous CO levels.

Prevention and detection are two ways you can protect yourself and family from an accidental poisoning.

- Install both battery-operated and hard-wired CO detectors in your home, especially near heating sources. Make sure the batteries are new and replaced yearly.
- Have a qualified technician check your heating systems, water heaters, and other gas-, oil- or coal-burning appliances every year.

- Have your chimney and flue inspected and cleaned yearly.
- Make sure that your chimney is not blocked with snow before you use your fireplace.
- Never use gas-powered appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers to heat your home.
- DO NOT use camp stoves, charcoal grills, or hibachis inside your home, in the basement, or in the garage.
- Never operate a generator inside your home or garage. Only operate a generator outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to seep indoors.
- DO NOT run a vehicle inside your garage, even if the garage door is open

CO poisoning is entirely preventable. You can protect yourself and your family by preparing your home heating sources for winter, acting wisely in case of a power outage, and following the prevention tips listed above. If you think you or someone in your home is exposed to CO immediately get them out of the exposed area and into fresh air and call 911 for help.

Sources: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/copoisoning>, <http://www.consumersenergy.com>

What Would You Do If The Poison Center Did Not Exist?

Most poisonings are accidents. Accidents aren't expected to happen...but they do! That's why the poison center exists.

The role of the Poison Centers is vital to the health and safety of our community. Most people are not aware of who answers the phone or all of the services we provide. However, they count on us being there in the event of a poison exposure, because we are the experts on poisonings.

The Upstate New York Poison Center assists the medical community and general public with poison emergencies and information by providing state of the art management expertise. The majority of home exposure calls can be treated at home and do not require going to the hospital or emergency care facility.

According to our customer service survey, if the Poison Center did not exist, many people would call 911, their doctor or go to the hospital. As experts in poisoning we are here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. So, in a poison emergency or for poison prevention information, call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Holiday Plants

The holiday season is always a time for gift giving. Many people elect to give a plant as a gift. Although plants look lovely, many can have toxic properties. May we suggest that if you are giving a plant during the holiday season you select one that is non-toxic or has a very low risk of toxicity. This is especially important if the gift is going to a home with young children. Some suggestions for gift giving are:

- Christmas Cactus
- Begonia
- Wandering Jew
- Impatiens
- Coleus
- Violets
- Swedish Ivy
- Zebra Plant
- Spider Plant
- Prayer Plant



Many Seniors Unaware of Dangers of Taking Medications and Driving

Statistics show that people are living longer which means that more seniors are on the road driving. Although, seniors are involved in a small percent of the over all motor vehicle crashes, the crashes they are involved in are higher in regard to the number of miles traveled. Further, if they are involved in a motor vehicle crash they are more likely to be injured or killed.

In a recent study from the University of Alabama at Birmingham's (UAB) Center for Injury Sciences, found that seniors are not aware of the potential risks of driving while under the influence of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Researchers have labeled the condition, potential driver-impairing (PDI).

The study was funded by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The objective of this study was to better understand older drivers' experiences with prescription and OTC medications and driving, whether they had been alerted by clinicians or pharmacists about potential impacts, and to assess overall knowledge about the potential impacts on driving.

The study found that the more medications a person takes the greater risk of PDI. The study also revealed that seniors are not being told of the potential risks of PDI by their primary healthcare providers. "These findings indicate that health-care professionals need to take a more active role in educating their patients about the risks

Preventing Teen Drug Abuse

National Coalition for Parent Involvement and Education (NCPIE) along with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and representatives from 15 nationally recognized prevention, health professional and child advocacy organizations, have launched the *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer: What You Can Do to Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse* toolkit. This new comprehensive online resource, offers a complete workshop module to educate and equip teen influencers — parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, community and school-based healthcare providers and others — with credible information about teen prescription drug abuse and effective strategies to take action to help prevent it.

Source: http://www.talkaboutrx.org/maximizing_role.jsp

of PDI medications," said Paul MacLennan, Ph.D., the lead author of the study and an assistant professor at UAB. "Society needs to understand that PDI medications are a driving-safety issue, and there is a need for increased education geared at older drivers, their families and health professionals."

It is important for seniors and their caregivers to ask more questions about the potential side effects of their medications and the PDI.

Source: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/home/>

'Stop Ask First' Video on Our Website and YouTube

Our most popular teaching video is now available for viewing on our website at <http://www.upstate.edu/poison/kids/stopaskfirst> or on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheNYSPoisonCenters>

This multimedia animated poison prevention video features Mellie and Zipper of the Toon Family, the new "first-family" of poison prevention. STOP! Ask First, is available in DVD/VHS formats and is geared towards children in grades K - 3. This entertaining and informative video reinforces the message to always "Stop and Ask First" before touching, tasting, or smelling anything, especially poisons.



Poison Prevention Series

STOP ASK FIRST!

POISON HeP
1-800-222-1222

New York State Poison Control Centers & University at Albany School of Public Health present
STOP! Ask First!
An animated video about poison prevention for young children.

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.