



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

**50 YEARS**

# Poison Prevention

Newsletter

September 2010

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

## Mark Your Calendar – Healthy Observances

### September

- September is National Baby Safety Month – Visit [www.wholesomebabyfood.com/babysafety.htm](http://www.wholesomebabyfood.com/babysafety.htm)
- National Childhood Injury Prevention Week Sept 1 – 7 – Visit these websites for more information: The American Academy of Pediatrics website at [www.aap.org/healthtopics/safety.cfm](http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/safety.cfm), Safe Kids Worldwide [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org), and Upstate NY Poison Center [www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org)
- Healthy Aging Month visit [www.healthaging.net](http://www.healthaging.net)

### October

- Talk About Prescriptions Month – National Council on Patient Information and Education [ncie@ncpie.info](mailto:ncie@ncpie.info) and Talk about prescriptions at [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org)

### November

- National Family Week, November 21 – 27, Alliance for Children and Families [www.nationalfamilyweek.org](http://www.nationalfamilyweek.org)

## Child-Resistant Does Not Mean Childproof

In the United States more than two million possible poisonings are reported to poison centers each year, with approximately 90% happening in the home. The majority of those reported are unintentional poisonings involving children.

There are several products in the home and garage that are potentially toxic and could be poisonous if ingested, inhaled or is sprayed or splashed on the skin or in the eyes. Each year the media reports on stories of children dying or suffering serious injury because a child accidentally ingested a product that had child-resistant packaging. Either the child was able to open the product or it was not secured properly.

Children are curious and like to imitate adults. They learn very quickly how to open products by watching adults. The mistake people make is thinking that child-resistant specialty packaging is childproof.

According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission and the Poison Prevention Packaging Act,

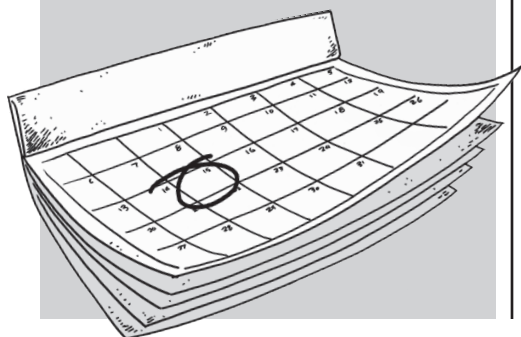
*“The term “special packaging” means packaging that is designed or constructed to be significantly difficult for children under five years of age to open or obtain a toxic or harmful amount of the substance contained therein within a reasonable time and not difficult for normal adults to use properly, but does not mean packaging which all such children cannot open or obtain a toxic or harmful amount within a reasonable time”.*

Child resistant packaging should not be the first line of defense to prevent unintentional poisonings from happening it should be the last. There is a reason it is called child-resistant, rather than childproof, because some children will be able to open it. For this reason experts caution people to lock up all medicine and hazardous material out of the reach of children.

Unintentional poisoning is an avoidable public health problem when proper precautions are taken. Here is a list of recommendations to prevent unintentional medicine poisonings.

### Safe Practice Recommendations

- All prescription and OTC medications, as well as vitamins, herbals, and household products, are potentially dangerous to children and should be kept out of their reach and sight
- Alert parents, grandparents, and caregivers that medications stored in non-child-resistant vials, pillboxes, or weekly pill planners must not be accessible to children. More than one third of all childhood ingestions involve a grandparent's medication.



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## Did You Know?

In November of 1953 the poison center at Presbyterian–St Luke's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois was formally recognized as the nation's first poison center.

In that same year Dr. Elbert Thornton a physician from Texas and Woodrow Wilson Skirvin a US defense product manufacturer, were sharing a hospital room in Rochester MN. They started to brainstorm on the idea of child-resistant locking closure devices on containers. After a series of experimentations between the Dr. Thornton and Mr. Skirvin, the first safety cap was patented in 1954.

It is hard to estimate how many lives have been saved and injuries have been prevented as a result of their collaboration. The impact is worldwide, in the United States the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulates the thousands of products with child resistant packaging and the International Standards Organization (ISO) regulates the international requirements for child resistant packaging. The standards provide an internationally recognized test method for assessing the child-resistant characteristics of packages before they are put on the market for consumer use.

Source: <http://www.iso.org/iso/pressrelease.htm?refid=Ref861>

## Back To School Means Time To Talk to Your Children About Poisons

Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are just a few of the potential poisons that await your child as they return back to school. Whether it is on the play ground, street corner or a friend's house, your children are vulnerable to being exposed to poisons through peer pressure and the desire to "fit in" with other students.

There can be a lot of pressure on kids today with trying to balance school, sports, friends and family. Often these pressures can lead to experimenting with drugs, alcohol and stimulants. The best defense for parents is to be the first to talk to their kids about making good decisions and the dangers of drugs, alcohol and stimulants.

If you struggle to talk with your kids about alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, there is a website to help parents find solutions, the website is [www.TimeToTalk.org](http://www.TimeToTalk.org). Time to talk was developed by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Time to talk, provides easy-to-use guides and tips to help you have ongoing conversations with your kids to keep them healthy and drug-free.

## Child-Resistant Does Not Mean Childproof

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- If non-child-resistant caps are requested, explain or provide a leaflet that explains the risk of accidental poisonings and what preventive steps should be taken to safeguard medications. Promote the use of child-resistant caps, especially for those who have children that live with or visit them.
- Demonstrate the proper method to open and close the child-resistant container to those who find it difficult, before resorting to non-child-resistant caps
- Periodically query patients with blanket requests for non-child-resistant closures to verify that they understand the consequences if children access these medications
- Ensure that child-resistant packaging used at your pharmacy meets current standards by requesting child-resistant packaging test data from the prescription vial manufacturer or supplier
- Do not mix vials and closures from different manufacturers because they may not function properly together

Source: Dr. Gaunt is a medication safety analyst and the editor of ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Community/Ambulatory Care Edition.

## Child Resistant Packaging Requirements

The Poison Prevention Packaging Act, administered by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, requires special child resistant packaging of any household substance which may cause serious injury to children if handled, used or ingested. Such packaging must be difficult for children under the age of five to open, while not being difficult for normal adults. Protocol testing requires that of 200 children tested between the ages of 42 and 51 months a minimum of 85% be unable to open the containers. Of 100 adults tested, no less than 90% must be able to open and reseal the containers without directions. A manufacturer may produce a non-child resistant package for use by elderly or handicapped persons or for households without children provided that the product is also available in child resistant packages. The noncomplying package must bear a conspicuous label stating: "This package for households without young children." If the package is small, it must be labeled "Package not child-resistant."

Sources: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prere1/prhtml02/02015.html>



## Cadmium, Lead and Keeping Kids Safe

Six months ago the word “cadmium,” probably didn’t mean much to most people. These days, though, cadmium is quickly becoming a household name.

The heavy metal was recently responsible for two massive recalls, one involving Shrek drinking glasses sold at McDonald’s, the other Hannah Montana children’s jewelry. Both were made with a potentially dangerous amount of cadmium.

Cadmium is a metal used in the manufacturing of batteries, dyes, glasses, and ceramics. Products containing cadmium are not harmful to touch but can be harmful if they are put in the mouth or swallowed, which can result in a poisoning. Since children are often putting things in their mouths, they are considered an at-risk age group.

Cadmium is one of two main culprits responsible for huge recalls of toys and children’s products. Lead, a more commonly known threat, can be poisonous if absorbed in the body through breathing or swallowing. Lead poisoning can happen gradually or through large exposures.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers offers the following tips aimed at preventing lead and cadmium poisoning.

- Read product ingredient labels before purchasing an item, especially if it’s intended for children. Avoid products that do not have ingredient lists available.
- Keep small items out of children’s reach. These items can be choking hazards but also can contain toxins such as lead or cadmium.
- Make sure children wash hands thoroughly after playing and before eating.

- Notice that the symptoms of short-term exposure to cadmium can include stomach irritation, vomiting, and diarrhea. Long-term exposure or an extremely large exposure can cause kidney damage. Chronic exposure can also cause fragile bones and is linked to some cancers.
- Be aware: Currently, there are no federal laws regulating manufacturers’ use of cadmium in children’s jewelry. In some cases, companies use cadmium as a substitute for lead since the United States bans the use of lead in manufacturing children’s products or toys.
- Take an inventory of possible lead sources in the home even though regulations are tighter. These sources may include lead paint used in older homes (before 1978), drinking water from lead pipe plumbing, toys made outside of the country, contaminated herbal supplements, and small weights (like fishing lures).
- Be particularly aware of the dangers of lead poisoning in small children: Unborn babies, infants, and toddlers are most vulnerable to the effects of chronic lead exposure.
- Watch for signs of lead poisoning in children, which include loss of appetite, tiredness, abdominal pain, and vomiting. Long term-exposure to lead can include irritability, fatigue, behavioral change, and developmental delays.

If you are concerned that your child might have come into contact with a product containing cadmium or lead, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 or your child’s doctor.

Source: American Association of Poison Control Centers

# The 2010 - 11 Flu Season

Last flu season (2009–2010) saw the emergence of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, which caused the first influenza pandemic in more than 40 years. While not certain, it is likely that 2009 H1N1 viruses will continue to spread along with seasonal viruses in the U.S. during the 2010–2011 flu season. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone as the most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

The 2010 – 2011 flu vaccine will protect against three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season.

## Influenza Facts

- The influenza shot cannot cause the flu
- Influenza is the sixth leading cause of death among U.S. adults
- Each year, approximately 36,000 people die from seasonal influenza and another 114,000 are hospitalized
- Influenza is a highly contagious disease that is spread by coughing, sneezing, direct physical contact and contact with objects that carry the virus (e.g., doorknobs, phones, etc.)
- Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, extreme fatigue, headache and body aches, sore throat and runny nose
- You may be contagious before symptoms develop
- Immunization is 70–90 percent effective in preventing influenza in healthy people under the age of 65

Source: Upstate Medical University

## **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.**