



# Poison Prevention

## Newsletter

## December 2012

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

### Are Your Medications Safe After A Natural Disaster?

Following a natural disaster, focus is generally on the basic necessities of shelter, food and clean water to drink. But, what about medications? Depending on a person's medical health, having medicine on hand or a refill immediately available can be just as crucial as food and water. The Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), which is part of the FDA website, offers helpful recommendations for people to decide whether they should use their medications that may have been damaged during a disaster.

#### Was my medication exposed to contaminated water?

Many medications come in containers that are not airtight or leak proof. Pills, oral liquids, inhalers, injectables and topical creams are all drugs that can become water damaged. Patients need to be aware that the water might very well be contaminated with bacteria or other harmful things that can cause disease or serious health damage. Children's medications that are mixed with water before taking must be done so only with purified or bottled water. They should never be mixed with other types of liquids or water that is possibly contaminated.

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### Holiday Hazards



Buyer Beware – The holidays are upon us. There is a scramble among toy manufacturers to come out with *the* toy that is at the top of children's holiday "wish lists." Toy shoppers often seek to select toys that are fun, educational and popular. The purpose of the New York Public Interest Research Group/ NYPIRG report, "Traucherous Toys: Dangerous and Toxic Toys on New York's Store Shelves," is to ensure that toy shoppers take safety into consideration when they are selecting toys and other children's products this holiday season.

NYPIRG identified 19 potentially unsafe toys and children's products in 32 stores across NY State. Five toys posed a choking hazard and seven toys and children's products tested positive for the toxic substance phthalates.<sup>1</sup> Surveyors also identified four toys that pose puncture/impact hazards, three excessively loud toys and one potentially unsafe magnetic toy.

In buying a toy for a child be sure it is safe.

Source: [www.nypirg.org/pubs/consumer.html](http://www.nypirg.org/pubs/consumer.html), <http://toys.about.com/od/healthandsafety/bb/toysafetycheck.html>

Additionally, toys that have magnets or require batteries present a potential choking and poisoning hazard. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has reported that high-powered magnets are a safety risk when swallowed. Reports of children ingesting these magnets and having them attract through stomach and intestinal walls and cause severe damage to a child's stomach and small intestines, often requiring surgery to be removed. Button batteries are especially dangerous, they may become lodged in the esophagus or intestine, slowly leaking alkaline electrolytes and causing an internal chemical burn. Often the parents are not aware that a child has swallowed a battery until it is too late.

**Alcoholic beverages** – Eggnog with rum, fruit punches with vodka, and a variety of mixed drinks are tempting to children who can't tell the difference. Even the bottles that sparkling grape juice comes in, looks just like wine or champagne. It can be difficult to tell the alcoholic beverages from the non-alcoholic one. A good rule to follow is, keep alcoholic beverages separate from other drinks. Children can't metabolize nor tolerate alcohol like an adult. Unintentional ingestion could lead to an alcohol poisoning.

**Carbon Monoxide** – is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas that can cause serious health problem even death. Carbon monoxide, CO<sub>2</sub> poisoning is preventable if you follow these simple safety steps.

- Install CO<sub>2</sub> alarms in the basement, kitchen and near the bedrooms
- Change the batteries to insure they are in proper working condition
- Never operate a propane cooking devise inside the garage or home
- Allow plenty of ventilation when using kerosene or any other fossil fuel heating devise
- If you suspect you are anyone is exposed to CO<sub>2</sub> gas call 911 and get outside where there is fresh air

## Development: “BeSafe Initiative”

Beginning in 2011, the Upstate New York Poison Center identified an emerging trend related to the use of drugs known as “bath salts” and “synthetic marijuana”. 90% of these calls were originating in Emergency Departments within the Center’s 54 county service area. During the spring and summer of 2012, bath salt scenarios were capturing national headlines on a daily basis.

In fall 2012, the Upstate New York Poison Center along with other program partners hosted a Forum at Onondaga Community College to listen to community participants from health care, law enforcement, social services, education, emergency service personnel and others as they voiced their concerns about these dangerous drugs and the resulting repercussions rippling through the community.

In response, the Poison Center and the Prevention Network CNY joined in collaboration with Onondaga County to develop one strategy to address the problem, the “BeSafe Initiative”.

Announced by the Onondaga County Legislature, the BeSafe Initiative was directed by the County Departments of Health and Mental Health and was developed and implemented by the Upstate New York Poison Center and the Prevention Network CNY. The identified goal was to inform and educate the community about these drugs, identifying risk factors while promoting protective factors to prevent the use of these drugs, especially among youth.

The BeSafe Initiative consists of a Train the Trainer component, as well as a presentation for Students/Youth and one for Parents and Human Service personnel. Developed as a turnkey project, training is directed at school and community service personnel to in turn teach others about designer drugs.

Throughout November and December training is being held at the Onondaga–Madison County BOCES and the Prevention Network CNY. Additionally, the presentation for students and that for parents and human service personnel are accessible through the Upstate New York Poison Center website at [www.upstatepoison.org](http://www.upstatepoison.org). Follow directives from the website homepage.

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#### Was my medication exposed to excessive heat or loss of refrigeration?

Medication exposed to excessive heat or those that require refrigeration in a power outage are a real concern. According to Dr. Alexander Garrard, Clinical Toxicologist at the Upstate NY Poison Control Center, some medications can become less effective when exposed to excessive heat or loss of refrigeration. “The potency of a drug like insulin can be reduced due to chemical change. This would pose a problem for diabetics who rely on insulin.”

Patients unsure about taking medication that has been exposed to heat or loss of refrigeration should contact their physician, the Poison Control, a pharmacist or the manufacturer’s customer service department for guidance.

[www.fda.gov/Drugs/EmergencyPreparedness/ucm085200.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/EmergencyPreparedness/ucm085200.htm)

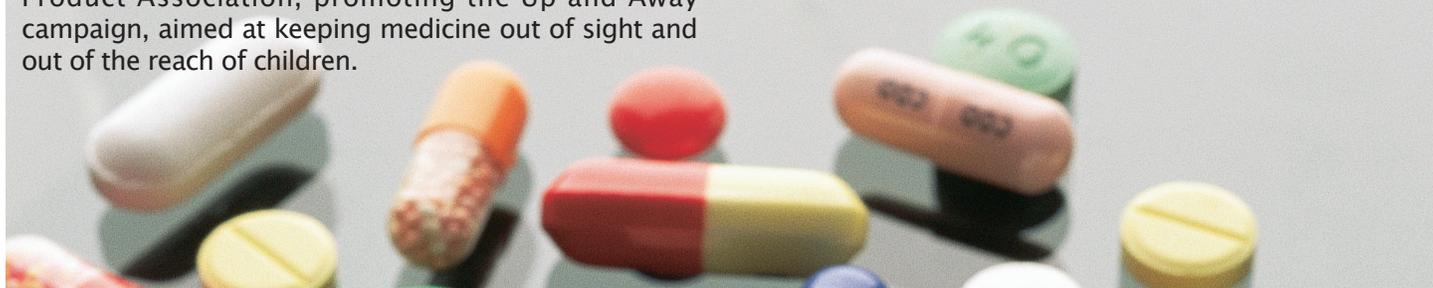
The Upstate New York Poison Center is a program partner with the CDC and the Consumer Health Care Product Association, promoting the Up and Away campaign, aimed at keeping medicine out of sight and out of the reach of children.

#### Safe Medicine Storage is Essential to Reduce Unsupervised Medication Overdoses

Every year, more than 60,000 young children – or roughly four school busloads of children per day – age five or younger are treated in emergency departments (EDs) after getting into medicine while their parents or caregivers were not looking. Unsupervised ingestions are preventable, and we can all play a role in keeping curious children safe by storing medicines and vitamins in places that are too high for children to reach or see!

The **Up and Away and Out of Sight** educational program provides easy-to-understand resources and tools to help prevent unintentional ingestions, including a medication safety tip sheet that reminds us to never leave medicines or vitamins out on a kitchen counter or at a sick child’s bedside, and to never tell children that medicine is candy so they will take it.

To learn more about Up and Away and Out of Sight and its resources and tools, visit [www.UpandAway.org](http://www.UpandAway.org).



# What are Energy Drinks?

Energy drinks are increasing in popularity especially among youth. Energy drinks are sold under names such as; 5 Hour Energy®, Monster®, Rockstar®, Amp®, and Redbull®. Most contain large amounts of both caffeine and sugar along with a combination of legal stimulants and supplements such as taurine, guarana, and ginseng. The amount of caffeine in many energy drinks is much greater than the amount found in soda and is often much greater than the amount found in a cup of coffee, putting consumers at a far greater risk of caffeine overdose and related health problems. The chart below show caffeine content of various caffeinated beverages.

## Energy Drinks vs. Sports Drinks

There is some confusion about the difference between energy drinks and sports drinks. Sports drinks such as Gatorade® or Powerade® are designed to re-hydrate the body while energy drinks can produce the opposite effect. It is important to note that new energy drinks are hitting the store shelves and frequently marketed as sports drinks. So always read the label before purchasing.

## What are the Dangers?

Many people mistakenly think of caffeine as a food rather than a drug. Caffeine is a diuretic drug; therefore large doses can be very dehydrating. This can pose a problem for those consuming energy drinks while participating in sports, or during or after exercise. Excessive caffeine use can produce symptoms such as upset stomach, heart palpitations, sweating, tremors, vomiting, delirium, headache, diarrhea, and chest pains. Some energy drinks now contain alcohol. While these are supposed to be regulated as alcoholic beverages, they are frequently on the store shelves next to the non-alcoholic brands. This can cause confusion not only for consumers, but also for store clerks who may sell the product without realizing it contains alcohol. Another danger exists when energy drinks are mixed with other caffeine containing products, or when they are mixed with alcohol. Using



stimulants can mask the effects of alcohol, therefore increasing the possibility of consuming excess amounts of alcoholic beverages.

## Minimizing Risk

Be aware of what you are putting into your body. There are alternatives to consuming energy drinks. Eating carbohydrates such as fruit, vegetables, cereal and whole-grain breads can increase energy. While many energy drinks are not necessarily harmful if consumed in small amounts, claims on the label can be misleading. Energy drinks are highly concentrated sugary, caffeinated drinks that should be consumed with caution.

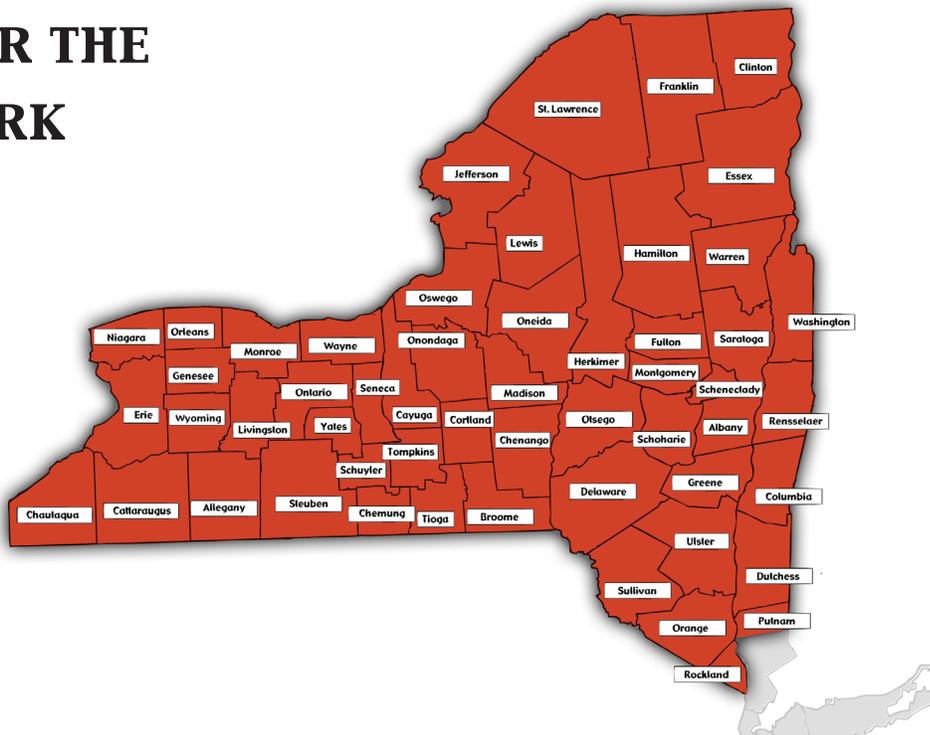


| Brand Name             | Size of Product | Amount of Caffeine |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Rockstar               | 2.5 oz          | 200 mg             |
| Monster Energy         | 16.0 oz         | 160.0 mg           |
| 5 Hour Energy          | 2.0 oz          | 138.0 mg           |
| Starbucks Frappuccino  | 9.5 oz          | 115.0 mg           |
| Brewed Coffee          | 8.0 oz          | 110.0 mg           |
| Espresso               | 2.0 oz          | 100.0 mg           |
| Red Bull               | 8.3 oz          | 80.0 mg            |
| Mountain Dew           | 12.0 oz         | 55.0 mg            |
| SoBe Essential Energy  | 8.0 oz          | 48.0 mg            |
| Coca-Cola              | 12.0 oz         | 34.0 mg            |
| Diet Coke              | 8.0 oz          | 45.0 mg            |
| Snapple Lemon Iced Tea | 8.0 oz          | 19.0 mg            |

# SERVICE AREA FOR THE UPSTATE NEW YORK POISON CENTER



**UPSTATE**  
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## 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.