

POISONS

*Definition:*

- A poison is a substance which enters the body and can cause illness or death. It may act within a matter of seconds (e.g. carbon monoxide) or a matter of years (e.g. car pollution). There are four basic ways in which poison can enter the body; by swallowing, breathing, injecting, or absorbing. Any of these methods can be life threatening. Many times children are the innocent casualties.



*Ingested Poisons:*

- Examples can include bad food, household cleaners, perfumes, nail polish remover, etc.
- If the person is having trouble breathing, is convulsing, is unconscious, or is in pain, call the ambulance immediately. If the person appears to be fine but you want to make sure call your doctor or local hospital. For your area this number can be found at the front of your local telephone directory. In order for them to help you they need to know what the person took, how much, their age and weight, and their present condition. They will either tell you to seek medical help immediately, give them something to drink, or to monitor them to make sure they don't get worse. Make sure you do not induce vomiting unless you are told to do so by a physician as some substances are corrosive and may burn on the way up. Also, do not give anything to drink unless instructed by a physician as some substances may react more with liquids. Always keep cleaners and chemicals high up so children can not access them.

*Breathed/Inhaled Poisons:*

- This can include fumes from household cleaners, industrial products, smoke, etc. Fresh air is the immediate first aid treatment. But first make sure you are not putting yourself in danger. Seek medical help for the person immediately. Never mix cleaners unless it specifies on the container. Never use chemicals in poorly ventilated areas. Be aware of carbon monoxide as it can not be smelled, has no taste, and can not be seen. It can be produced by any engine (e.g. house furnace, car), or even a fireplace with poor ventilation. Every home should have a carbon monoxide detector. If the detector begins to sound you need to leave the house immediately and call the fire department from the neighbor's house. Carbon monoxide poisoning makes you feel sleepy and drowsy and can have an effect in a matter of minutes so you aren't aware of what is happening.

*Injected Poisons:*

- Some examples include needles, broken glass, mosquitoes, spider bites, bee stings, etc. As soon as possible remove the object from the skin. Clean the area thoroughly with soap and water. If an allergic reaction occurs, or you believe there is a risk of infection, seek medical help.



*Absorbed Poisons:*

- These are poisons which enter the body through the skin, but do not cause a puncture. Some examples are household cleaners, industrial products, poisonous plants, etc. Remove the substance as soon as possible by using large amounts of running water. Do your best not to contaminate other body parts. There are some chemicals that will react more with water, but if you leave them on the skin they will react anyway with skin moisture. Seek medical help. If you work with chemicals make sure you know how to do the job safely and always use safety equipment.

Common household poisons that can harm babies and children:

- Nail polish and nail polish remover.
- Lipstick and lip gloss.
- Mascara.
- Medication including: Panadol, Tylenol, Aspirin.
- Vitamins or other supplements.
- Cleaning supplies: e.g. bleach.
- Aerosols and other insect repellents.
- Poisons used for insect and pest control.
- Soaps: dishes, hands, clothes, etc.
- Smoke from smoking.



Teach your children about poisons. Don't assume they know.