



poison prevention press

Poison Centers...Not Just for Kids

In 2011, 45% of the human exposure calls made to the MPC were about children under the age of 6 years old. That means that 55% of the calls were about older children, tweens, teens, adults and seniors. The MPC can help with drug interactions, suicide attempts, medicine errors, substance abuse, chemical spills and workplace exposures. Specially trained pharmacists and nurses are available 24/7 to answer your call. Program 1-800-222-1222 in your mobile phone so you are prepared for any poison emergency.

Did you know that...

The Maryland Poison Center managed just under 1,000 human exposures involving laundry products in 2011.

Human exposure calls involving household cleaning products were among the top 10 most common exposures for young children, adolescents and adults in 2011.

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The Poison Facts of Laundry Products

What comes to mind when you think of household cleaning products? You probably think of floor cleaners, bathroom cleaners, all-purpose cleaners for the kitchen, toilet bowl cleaners, window cleaners, maybe even furniture polish. And hopefully you keep these products stored safely out of the sight and reach of small children. Laundry products should be included in this list. Let's take a closer look at products we use in the laundry and learn why we need to be mindful of their storage.



Photo-Iowa Statewide PCC

Laundry detergent has gone through many changes over the years. In general, these products contain soap to clean the clothes. They can be powders, liquids, concentrated liquids and now pods. When these products are ingested, we expect some stomach upset and vomiting. When they get in the eye, they are irritating. But we need to remember that as the concentration of the soap increases, from regular liquid to concentrated liquid to pod, the likelihood of vomiting increases. In addition, the likelihood of more severe symptoms with eye exposures increases. The new laundry pods are very colorful and squishy. As a result they are attractive to young children who may think they are candy or just fun to play with. When the pods are punctured by the teeth, the liquid can forcefully squirt into the back of the throat and be inhaled into the lungs. Eye exposures can occur when the pod is squeezed and the liquid squirts into the eye.

Color booster or stain removing products may contain more concentrated soaps or enzymes. These products can be very irritating to the mouth and throat when ingested. They can also cause nausea and vomiting. When they get in the eye, they are irritating and may cause a scratch on the eye.

Liquid fabric softeners can be a little more irritating than laundry detergents. Mouth and throat irritation and vomiting are possible with ingestions. Eye exposures can cause irritation or minor burns. Prolonged contact with the skin can cause redness and irritation.

Bleach is very common in laundry rooms. Many think bleach will cause burns in the mouth and throat when swallowed. Actual burns rarely occur, but it will cause a burning sensation because it is very irritating to the mouth and throat. Swallowing bleach will often result in vomiting. Bleach on the skin or in the eye can cause redness and discomfort, but there are some formulations that may cause eye damage. Some will measure their bleach in a regular drinking cup. Calls are often made to the poison center because someone has mistaken a cup of bleach for water. Use a measuring cup in the laundry room for your bleach instead of a drinking cup. If you get distracted by the telephone or doorbell while doing the laundry, do not leave the cup unattended...take it with you or pour the bleach back in the bottle.

Dryer sheets will not cause poisoning symptoms, but they can be a choking hazard if young children put them in their mouth.

The same care should be used when storing laundry products as with other household cleaners. They should be kept out of sight and reach of children. Don't let children play in the laundry room. Use special measuring cups rather than drinking cups for your laundry products. If a laundry product is swallowed, give milk or water to drink; if the product is on the skin or in the eye, rinse with water. Follow up right away with a call to the experts at the Maryland Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) for further instructions and more information about the specific product involved in the exposure.