



# Prevention Press

September 2008

Volume 1 Issue 5

## Child-resistant, Not Child-proof

Child resistant containers have been around since 1972 when the Poison Prevention Packaging Act took effect. The use of child-resistant packaging has greatly reduced the number of childhood fatalities due to poisoning. Everyone should remember that these packages are not child-proof. Given enough time, many children will be able to open a child resistant package, so child-resistant packaging should not take the place of adult supervision. Never leave children unattended with household products and medicines in their reach or sight.

## Did you know that...

- In 2007, medicines were involved in 67.1% of calls to the Maryland Poison Center?
- In 2007, pain relievers and fever reducing medicines were the 3rd most common exposure in children under the age of 6 years old and the most common exposure in children 6-19 years and adults 20 years and older?

## Always Ask First

Children under the age of 6 years account for approximately 50% of all calls to the Maryland Poison Center. One of the reasons for this alarming statistic is due to look-alike products.

The next time you are in the grocery store, take a walk down the cleaning product aisle. It is filled with very pretty colors; colors that look like juice, sports drinks and soda. The fragrance of many of these products is also appealing, mimicking food and drink. Take a close look at the packaging. There are a few products out there whose bottles have the same round shape and contours that are found in energy drinks and vitamin waters. Remember, most children under the age of 6 years cannot read well enough to know that the bottle contains a cleaner and should not be consumed.



Many medicines look like candy—especially to a young child who has experienced the joy of candy for the first time. They know it was tasty and are in search of more. They do not realize that every shiny green bite sized item is not an M & M® or Skittles®. Some medicines are manufactured to intentionally look like candy while others are flavored with kid-friendly flavors in an attempt to make giving the medicine easier.

How can we decrease the likelihood that a child will be confused by a look-alike product? Store all cleaning products and medicines out of sight and out of reach of young children, preferably in a locked cabinet. Never call medicine candy. This will add to an already confusing situation for a child. Store medicines in their original containers. Never use a baggie to store medicine in a purse, briefcase or diaper bag. Children associate baggies with treats and when they come across a baggy of pills, they think it is a baggie of candy. Remember that containers are “child-resistant” not “child-proof”. Given enough time, most children will be able to get the top off of a child-resistant container. Remember that daily pill reminders are not child-resistant and should be stored out of sight and out of reach. Finally, teach young children to **Always Ask First** before touching, tasting or smelling something. These three simple words, repeated often, will increase the likelihood that your child will do the right thing when he comes across a baggy on the playground.

Remember, if you suspect that your child has gotten into a medicine or a cleaning product, contact the Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 right away.

The poison experts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help with these situations. The call is free and confidential.

