

PoisonPreventionPress

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Top Reasons for Calls about Children

Children less than 6 years old accounted for 41% of exposure calls to the Maryland Poison Center in 2015.

The most common substances we were called about were:

1. Cosmetics and personal care products
2. Household cleaners
3. Analgesics (pain relievers and fever reducers)
4. Foreign bodies
5. Topical preparations (for the skin)

Did you know that...

- In 2015, the MPC answered an average of 121 calls per day?
- In 2015, 78% of exposure calls to the MPC involved medicines?



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Child-resistant is NOT Child-proof

It seems as though those hard-to-open bottles have been around forever. And for new parents today, they have. But what is the reason and history behind the child-resistant packages?

The story begins in the 1960s when it was realized that children were dying from poisonings in large numbers. The country developed an education program to warn parents of the dangers of household items. But this was not enough. Children were still dying. It was decided that if a barrier was created between the children and household products and medicine, children would be safer. This led to the passage of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970.

This law states: "The packaging required must be designed or constructed to be significantly difficult for children under five years of age to open within a reasonable time, and not difficult for normal adults to use properly." Standards were created to determine if a package passes or fails a child test. The standards define the number of children that must be tested, a time limit, and the number of times the package is successfully opened. Standards for adults age 50-70 years were added in 1995. In these tests, the packages need to be able to be opened by a determined number of older adults in a specified time frame. The law also contains a list of medicines and household substance that must be packaged in child-resistant containers.

It is important to remember the intent of child-resistant packaging is to slow children down. They are not designed to keep them out completely. Children of varying ages will be able to get into child-resistant packages if given enough time. The good news is that since child-resistant packages have been used, the number of poisoning deaths in young children has decreased from over 200 in the 1960s and 1970s to less than 50 in 2014.

Child-resistant packages do not replace the need for proper storage and adult supervision. Follow these tips to help keep young children safe from poisonings and overdoses:

- Household products and medicines should be stored in their original containers in a place that is up and away and out of sight of young children. Locked cabinets are best if this is possible.
- Children should not be left alone in areas where medicines and household products are stored.
- Medicine bottles should not be used as rattles to entertain a child during diaper changing or when they are fussy.
- After using a product, take a moment to make sure the lid or closure is secure.

If you find your child has gotten into a medicine or household product, don't panic. Help is just a telephone call away. Calling 1-800-222-1222 right away puts you in touch with poison experts. These pharmacists and nurses will be able to tell you if you can manage the situation at home or if you need to seek medical attention. If you can manage the situation at home, they will recommend treatments to help avoid or minimize symptoms. They will also be able to tell you what symptoms to look for. Resist the urge to look for your answer on the internet. Searches may provide conflicting or wrong information. You will get the right answer, right away by contacting your local poison center. They are available 24/7. Your call is free and confidential.