

Poison Prevention Press

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First Aid for Poisonings

Perform the following first aid, then call 1-800-222-1222 for more information.

Swallowed Poison:

- Gently wipe out mouth and give a small amount of water.
- Do not make the person vomit.

Poison on the Skin:

- Remove contaminated clothing and jewelry.
- Rinse skin with lukewarm water for 10 minutes.

Poison in the Eye:

- Flush the eye with lukewarm water from cup, faucet, or shower for 15 minutes.
- Do not force the eyelid open.

Inhaled Poison:

- Get the person to fresh air.
- Open doors and windows.

Did you know that...

- Older Adults (ages over 59 years) accounted for 12.3% of cases reported to the MPC in 2024?
- For U.S. adults aged 65 years and older, the average number of medicines used per person is 4.3?

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Poison Help for Older Adults

Older adults do not need the services of the Maryland Poison Center, right? Wrong! Sure, most don't have young children in their homes on a regular basis. Yes, they have a lifetime of experience and know how to use household products. But the fact is – older adults do need the services of the Maryland Poison Center (MPC).

We define a poison as anything used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person. This includes many things, but most commonly, household cleaning products, personal care products, and medicine.

Take the following examples of common calls to the MPC from older adults:

"I placed my medicine and my husband's medicine on the kitchen counter. He thought it was meant for him and took both of our medicines!"

"I didn't put my glasses on to brush my teeth, and I accidentally put arthritis rub on my toothbrush rather than toothpaste!"

"I just picked my medicine up from the pharmacy. Usually, my blood pressure pills are blue, and my diabetes pills are green. Today they look different."

"I can't remember if I took my medicine this morning. What should I do?"

Older adults often take multiple medicines. This puts them at risk for drug interactions (medicines interacting with each other) and side effects. This also means that they must have a system or a routine that enables them to take their medicine properly. If an older adult forgets whether they have taken a medicine, there could be severe outcomes if they take a second dose too soon, or skip a dose, depending on the medicine. The MPC can help manage this situation.

As we age, our bodies undergo changes. Some of these are noticeable; others are not. Eyesight diminishes, making it more difficult to read the tiny text on product labels. Changes in liver and kidney function can affect how medicines are metabolized and eliminated. This can lead to medicines building up in the body, putting older adults at risk of adverse effects from the medicine.

While approximately 40 percent of cases managed by the Maryland Poison Center each year involve children 12 years or younger, they do not usually have deadly outcomes. Older adults account for approximately 9 percent of cases managed by poison centers nationwide, but account for approximately 32 percent of deaths. We don't want the older adults in your family or community to become part of this statistic.

Older adults should be reminded of the services of poison centers. Staffed by pharmacists and nurses 24/7, the Maryland Poison Center is a free resource for everyone and just a phone call away at 1-800-222-1222.