

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...

- Household cleaning products were among the top five most common substances reported to the MPC last year in children under 6 years old and adults 20-59 years old?

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Spring Cleaning

Let's spring into cleaning safely—because sparkling countertops are great, but accidental poisonings are not! Poisoning from household cleaning products is the second most common call to the Maryland Poison Center. Let's review the top five most common products and how to safely use and store them. Follow the first aid steps in the sidebar if you or someone you know has used a cleaning product incorrectly.

1. Bleach

Safe use: Many people think that bleach is a deadly poison, but it isn't when used correctly. Never use a drinking cup to measure or store bleach. Be careful when using bleach to make sure it doesn't splash into your eyes or onto your skin. Follow the directions on the label closely. Also, don't mix bleach with other cleaners - this can create dangerous fumes. If you are using other cleaning products after bleach, wipe or rinse the area thoroughly before using the next product.
Safe storage: Only store bleach in its original, labeled container. Do not store bleach in drink or food containers. When not in use, make sure the cap is closed tightly, and the container is up, away, and out of sight.

2. Laundry Packets

Safe use: Due to their bright colors, good smell, and squishy texture, we frequently receive calls about children getting into these products. Laundry packets contain a very concentrated liquid. If the packet is broken open or dissolved when wet, the liquid can get in the eyes, on the skin, or in the mouth. Follow the directions on the label for use. If your child helps you with the laundry, do not let them handle the laundry packet. Explain that the packet is not a toy and is only for adults to use.
Safe storage: These products should be stored in their original container, up, away, and out of sight. The colorful look and appealing smell can cause children to mistake these products for another item they could eat or drink. Do not store these in a clear jar as they can be mistaken for candy.

3. Dish Soap

Safe use: Follow label directions. Be sure to rinse items thoroughly after washing them with dish soap. Getting a taste of dish soap residue is not harmful; it just tastes bad. If a small amount is swallowed, no effects are expected. Larger amounts can cause vomiting and diarrhea.
Safe storage: Dish soap is often stored on the counter next to the sink. If possible, store dish soap a little higher, or in a cabinet, where children can't see or reach it.

4. All-Purpose Cleaners

Safe use: When buying an all-purpose cleaner, remember that products labeled "natural" are not always safe. Products can be labeled "natural" if it's made from a substance in nature. Substances found in nature can be harmful not used correctly. Children may want to help you clean, so it's important to explain to them that cleaning products should only be used by an adult or when an adult is watching. Some cleaners are bright colored and have labels with fruits, flowers, and other attractive items printed on them. This can cause children (and adults, too!) to think they are drinkable.

Safe storage: Keep all-purpose cleaners stored up, away, and out of sight. Also keep cleaners in their original labeled containers. When cleaning, if you step away to answer the door or phone, put the products back into a safe storage spot or bring them with you so children won't get into them while your attention is elsewhere.

5. Disinfectants

Safe use: Be sure to read the directions on the label before use. Disinfectant products may need to sit on the surface for a short period of time before being wiped for the product to work. When using disinfectants, be sure to let the surface dry thoroughly before placing items on it. Products labeled "natural" are not always safe. Products can be labeled "natural" if it's made from a substance in nature. Substances found in nature can be harmful if not used correctly.

Safe storage: Keep disinfectants stored up, away, and out of sight. Also keep disinfectants in their original labeled containers.