

Poisoning

Children under 5 years of age account for most of the accidental childhood poisoning.



1 to 3 year old children are at the most risk.

Each year in Australia the Poisons Information Centre receives many calls from concerned parents or carers of young children.

When & Where Poisoning Happens

Most child poisonings occur in the child's own home:

- Living Room
- Kitchen
- Bathrooms/ Laundry
- Sheds/Garages

Common Reasons for Poisoning

- Parent/carer is distracted.
- Child not properly supervised.
- Poisons/chemicals not stored out of reach.
- Poisons/chemicals not put away after use.
- Disrupted household routines.
- Visitors, eg grandparents with medication
- On holidays, or moving.
- Unexpected change in a child's development eg. starts to crawl, walk.
- Poisons placed in "familiar" containers, Eg soft drink bottles.

Toddlers are most at risk, because they are moving about and exploring their world with their mouth.

Real Life' Cases

- **Garage-** drank insecticides stored in a soft drink bottle.
- **Bathroom-** crawled into and opened cupboard, found eating nappy soak agent.
- **Kitchen-** swallowed dishwasher detergent while parent was packing dishwasher.
- **At Grandma's-** child found playing with empty container of sleeping tablets.
- **Living Room -** found playing with mum's bag, swallowed anti-histamine tablets.
- **Playing in friend's kitchen-** ate rat poison.



What are the Symptoms?

The symptoms will depend on what your child has swallowed, the amount they have swallowed and their general health.

Some poisons cause only minor symptoms, while others may cause:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Drowsiness
- tummy pain
- Burns or damage inside the mouth and food pipe (*oesophagus*).

Some poisons are highly toxic and only a small amount can cause serious health problems.



fact sheet

Child Safety Practices

- Store out of sight.
- Store out of reach (adult height or above).
- Use child restraint locks on cupboards. These can be obtained from many hardware stores, and other suppliers.
- Always use the original containers to store the chemicals or poisons. Don't use a familiar container that normally holds food or drink.
- Set safe storage areas, eg Laundry, Kitchen, and Bathroom.
- Storage in refrigerator eg medicines place in child proof container, such as a disk cabinet with a lock.
- Store all other medicines in a lockable cabinet.
- Store poisons in lockable cabinets.
- Always replace caps.
- While chemicals/poisons are in use, never leave them in reach of children or unattended.
- Put medicines away between use.
- Avoid using industrial strength cleaners into the home.
- Make sure your child cannot access garbage bins or kitchen tidies.
- Use products that have resistant packaging.
- Do not leave any objects that a child could climb on to access poisons.
- Keep the dishwasher door locked. Fill the appliance only when you are about to use it and preferably when children are sleeping.
- Have a safe place up high for visitor's purses, handbags, or hand luggage.
- Return old or unused medicines to your chemist.
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- Return old or unused medicines to your chemist.
- Take old or unused chemicals, paints and other poisons to the nearest Waste Management Centre.
- Remove poisonous plants from your garden. The Playground Advisory Unit at *Kidsafe NSW* can advise on harmful plants.

"Child Resistant"

"Child resistant" does not mean "Child Proof"

Check that "Child Resistant" Caps are working ie: caps on liquid medicines "gum up" and need to be cleaned.

Check that Caps are on properly.

Being a Role Model

- **Children learn by imitating adults.**
- Avoid taking medicines in front of them.
- Refer to medicines properly, not as "lollies".

In an Emergency

If your child swallows a poison do not try to make them vomit. Pick up the poison's container, the child and take them with you to the phone. Phone the **Poisons Information Centre**

13 11 26

(Australia-wide, 24 hours a day). Keep this number by your phone.

KIDSAFE NEW SOUTH WALES Inc.

Kidsafe House
Hainsworth Street
Locked Bag 4001
WESTMEAD NSW 2145
Ph: 02 9845 0890 Fax: 02 9845 0895
kidsafe@chw.edu.au
kidsafensw.org