what might poison your child?
a safety guide for parents and carers of young children

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Suspected poisoning is one of the most common reasons for children to be taken to A&E.

Find out how a few simple safety measures can help stop your child being taken to hospital with suspected poisoning.

**Medicines – general tips**

- keep the caps closed on medicine bottles and put all medicines away. Remember child-resistant caps slow a child down but they are not child-proof
- keep all medicines in their original containers, this means it is clear what is in them. It also means they are difficult for young children to open
- take care with tablets in packs you can see through or brightly coloured tablets – they are especially tempting to children
- don’t count out your tablets for the day and then leave them lying around
- take your medicine when your child isn’t around so they don’t try to copy you
- teach your child about using medicines safely. Never pretend they are sweets
- take leftover medicines to your local chemist for them to dispose of safely
- be careful when visiting relatives or friends – they may not follow the same rules.
Storing medicines

Keep medicines well out of reach and out of sight of young children. This could be a high cupboard or a cupboard with a child-resistant catch, a medicine cabinet with a lock or even a locked suitcase.

In particular:

- don’t keep them on your bedside table – your child can easily slip into your bedroom without being seen
- don’t keep them in a handbag – this is a favourite place for toddlers to find tablets, especially Grandma’s handbag!
- don’t keep them in the fridge – ‘keep cool’ usually means ‘keep away from warm places like beside radiators or in direct sunlight’. If a medicine needs to be kept in the fridge it will say so. If it does, keep it as high up and hidden as possible.

Household chemicals and products – general tips

- look for containers with child-resistant caps – but remember that child-resistant does not mean child-proof. Some products also contain a bittering agent such as Bitrex®. This helps to prevent children swallowing the contents because it makes them taste horrible
- cigarettes, alcohol, perfume, aromatherapy oils and mouthwash can also be poisonous to children
- don’t strip old furniture or paintwork when there are young children or pregnant women at home. The dust may contain lead which is harmful.
Storing household chemicals and products

- store all household chemicals and cleaning products out of sight and in cupboards with child-resistant catches. Keep them high up and out of reach. Don’t store them under the sink or on the floor by the toilet.
- move products out of reach if you are called away while using them, for example, if the phone rings while you are cleaning the toilet.
- dispose of empty containers safely.

Storing chemicals outdoors

- keep all chemicals like paint, white spirit, oil, anti-freeze for the car, and weed-killers and pesticides for the garden high up out of reach and out of sight.
- fit a padlock to the cupboard, shed or garage where they are kept.
- keep all chemicals in their original, labelled containers. Do not be tempted to put them into another bottle or container. It’s confusing – even for adults – and if it is in a container that a child recognises, such as a lemonade or water bottle, they could drink it by mistake.

www.capt.org.uk
In the garden

⚠️ teach your child never to eat plants or berries from the garden without showing them to you first. Make sure you can recognise common harmful plants, for information go to www.rhs.org.uk

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide is dangerous because you can’t see it, smell it or taste it and the symptoms of this type of poisoning can feel like ‘flu.

⚠️ fit carbon monoxide alarms wherever there is a flame-burning appliance (such as a gas boiler) or open fire

⚠️ make sure you keep ventilation outlets in your home free from blockages

⚠️ ensure you have your flame-burning appliances serviced regularly by a qualified engineer.

We strongly advise parents and carers to learn first aid

For further information on first aid and first aid courses contact

British Red Cross www.redcross.org.uk
St John Ambulance www.sja.org.uk
St Andrew’s www.firstaid.org.uk
First aid

If you think your child has swallowed something harmful:

for medicines

❤️ **DO check** if the child really took the medicine - if it's tablets, look on the floor and round about. It may be a false alarm
❤️ **DO find** the bottle or a sample tablet
❤️ **DO get** advice from your pharmacist, GP, NHS Direct: 0845 4647 (England and Wales), NHS 24: 08454 242424 (Scotland) or your local A&E department
❤️ **DON'T give** your child salt water or anything else to make them sick.

for chemicals

❤️ **DO find** the bottle or packet and take it with you if you go to hospital
❤️ **DO get** advice from your pharmacist, GP, NHS Direct: 0845 4647 (England and Wales), NHS 24: 08454 242424 (Scotland) or your local A&E department
❤️ **DON'T give** the child anything to drink - just wet their lips with cold water if they are burning
❤️ **DON'T try** to make the child sick - their vomit will cause damage if it goes into their lungs

If the child is unconscious or there is burning to the mouth, dial 999 immediately to call an ambulance.

capt is a charity committed to reducing childhood injury.

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