



When accidents happen with chemicals or medicine, call Poison Help. Get help right away from a nurse, pharmacist, or other poison expert.

North Dakota Department of Health
Injury Prevention Program
800.472.2286

PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov



If you think someone has been poisoned, remember:

1. Help is as close as your phone. **Keeping calm** will help you understand the advice and help the victim.
2. **Check the condition of the victim.** CALL 9-1-1 RIGHT AWAY IF the person:
 - Has collapsed (is unconscious).
 - Is having trouble breathing.
 - Has severe pain in the chest.
 - Shows other life-threatening signs.
3. **Call Poison Help** (800.222.1222) even if there are no signs of poisoning. Try to identify what poison is involved. If it is a product, bring the container with you to the phone.
4. A nurse, pharmacist or other poison expert will answer your call to Poison Help. Be ready to tell the person:
 - The name of the product.
 - The amount of product involved.
 - The age and weight of the victim.
 - What signs of poisoning you notice.
5. A poison expert will decide if the person is in danger. The poison expert will give you the advice you need. The poison center may stay on the phone with you while you get help, or call you later to follow up.
6. Most calls can be handled at home. If you need a doctor or ambulance, the poison expert will tell you right away.



Some Common Poisoning Risks

- Cleaning products
- Vitamins and food supplements, like minerals and herbs
- Medicines
- Cigarettes and cigarette butts
- Beauty products, perfumes and nail polish removers
- Carbon monoxide gas (CO) from cars and heating devices
- Insect sprays, weed killers and plant food
- Car care products (i.e., antifreeze, wiper fluid and motor oil)
- Alcohol or drugs of abuse (such as pain killers and cocaine)
- Plants in the house and yard
- Animal bites and stings

Tips to Prevent Poisonings

- Buy products that children can't open easily. Be aware that child-resistant caps are not risk free. Once a child learns how to open containers with these caps, they will not keep a child safe. A child only will take longer to open them.
- Keep medicines, cleaners and other poisons out of sight. Keep them in cabinets that are locked or in cabinets that children can't open.
- Be careful when using medicines, cleaners and other poisons. Don't leave them open when you answer the phone or doorbell. Replace the cap. Take the product with you. Poisonings can happen in just a few seconds.
- Always keep products in the containers they came in.
- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home.
- Be careful when taking more than one medicine. Read the labels to avoid an overdose. When taking more than one medicine at a time, make sure it's safe to take them together. If you have a question about medicines, call Poison Help (800.222.1222).

Poison Prevention Tips - Adults and Older Adults

Household Products and Other Strong Chemicals

- Keep products in the containers they came in. Do not use food containers to store household products and other strong chemicals. Never sniff containers to find out what's inside them. Store food away from household products and other strong chemicals. This may keep someone from confusing the products.
- Read the label before using these products and follow all directions.
- Never mix household products with other strong chemicals. Doing this may create poisonous gases.
- Turn on fans and open windows when using sprays or products with a vapor or strong smell. When spraying household products and other strong chemicals, point the spray nozzle away from people and pets. Stay away from areas that have just been sprayed.
- Wear protective clothing when using bug spray or other spray products. Put on a long-sleeve shirt, long pants, socks, shoes and gloves. Pesticides, such as flea and tick shampoo and rat poison, can be taken in through the skin. They can be extremely poisonous.
- Remove and wash clothing after using chemicals. Try to avoid skin contact with household products and other strong chemicals. If skin becomes wet, wash right away with soap and water.

Medicine and Prescription Drugs

- Make sure your medicines are clearly labeled, read directions and warnings and carefully follow the label's instructions every time you take them.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the drugs and food supplements such as vitamins, minerals or herbs that you are taking.
- Review all your medicines and supplements with your doctor and pharmacist at least once a year or when you start taking a new drug.
- Take medicines/drugs at the proper time. Some medicines/drugs should not be taken with food, alcohol or other medicines/drugs.
- Never take other people's prescription drugs. Take only those prescribed for you.

- Carry a list of all the medicines/drugs that you are currently taking in your purse or wallet in case of emergencies.
- Never take medicines or drugs in the dark. Turn on a light to make sure you take the right drug and dose. If you need glasses to read, wear them when taking the drugs.
- Never take more medicine/drugs than the doctor prescribes. Taking too much could harm you.

Over-The-Counter Drugs

- Common over-the-counter drugs include pain medicine, laxatives, cold medicines and antacids. All of these can cause problems when taken with other drugs. Know what types of over-the-counter drugs to avoid taking with your prescription drugs. When in doubt, ask your pharmacist or doctor before using an over-the-counter drug.
- To prevent problems, start by reading the label. Reading the label will tell you what the medicine is for (indications), how to take the medicine (directions), what is in the medicine (contents, or active and inactive ingredients), what the unusual effects are (warnings), and what activities you shouldn't do while taking the drug (precautions).
- Compare the active ingredients before taking two over-the-counter drugs together. Many drugs contain the same active ingredient. You can easily take more than is safe without knowing it.
- Dispose of expired, unused or unneeded prescription drugs in a safe manner. Some pharmacies will take back drugs, so ask your pharmacist how you can return such drugs for safe disposal.

When Children Visit

- When children visit your home, keep all medicines and household cleaning products locked up and out of reach. Protect children from poisonous household plants. Keep such plants out of reach.
- Avoid taking medicine in front of young children. They like to do what adults do.
- Give infants and children only medicines that are safe for their age and weight. The label will tell you what the correct dose is. NEVER CALL MEDICINE CANDY. Call medicine by its proper name.
- Choose products in containers that are hard for children to open. Replace caps tightly after use. Remember that **no** container can promise to keep children out.

SEASONAL TIPS – SPRING

As you begin spring cleaning and work on the yard, follow these simple tips to keep your family safe.

Household Cleaners and Other Chemical Products

- Keep poisons in the containers they came in. Do not use food containers (such as cups or bottles) to store household cleaners and other strong chemicals.
- Store strong chemicals away from food. Many poisonings occur when one product is mistaken for another.
- Read and follow the directions for use of products. Do this **BEFORE** using the products. Follow the advice carefully.



- Never mix chemicals. Doing so can create a poisonous gas.
- Turn on fans and open windows when using strong chemicals.
- When spraying chemicals, direct spray nozzle away from people and pets.
- Never sniff containers to see what's inside.

- Discard old or outdated products. First aid advice on containers may be incorrect and outdated.
- Call Poison Help to double check first aid information.
- Even in small amounts, windshield wiper fluid is poisonous. If swallowed, it can cause blindness or death to people and pets.
- Strong chemicals can burn the skin. Drain openers, toilet cleaners, rust removers and oven cleaners can cause such burns.
- Hydrocarbon liquids (liquids made from petroleum) are poisonous. They include gasoline, kerosene, charcoal lighter fluid, paint thinner, baby oil, lamp oil and furniture polish.
- If hydrocarbons are swallowed, they easily can get into the lungs. Even a small amount can cause breathing problems. The liquid coats the inside of the lungs and prevents oxygen from entering the blood stream.

Mushrooms

- Only experts can tell poisonous mushrooms from safe mushrooms.
- Eating even a few bites of certain

mushrooms can cause liver damage that can kill you.

- Poisonous mushrooms, called “death caps,” often grow in yards and parks.

Alcoholic Drinks and Products

- Alcohol can be a deadly poison for children. That’s because they are small and their livers are not fully developed. All of the following are dangerous for children: beer, wine, mixed drinks, other alcoholic beverages, facial cleaners and mouthwash.
- Alcohol will make a child sleepy.
- The child can develop low blood sugar. This can lead to seizures, coma and death.
- Be careful not to leave alcoholic drinks where children can reach them. Be alert at parties and gatherings. Children may find cups containing leftover alcohol within their reach.

Pesticides

- Pesticides can be taken in through the skin or inhaled. Even leather shoes and gloves do not offer full protection. Pesticides can be extremely poisonous. Stay away from areas that have been sprayed until the spray has dried or for at least one hour.
- Wear protective clothing when using bug spray or other spray

products. Put on a long-sleeve shirt, long pants, socks, shoes and gloves. Remove and wash clothing after using chemicals.

- If pesticides are splashed onto the skin, rinse with running water for 15 to 20 minutes. If pesticide contacts clothing, take off the clothing before rinsing skin.
- Many garden chemicals are poisonous to children and adults. These chemicals can be harmful if swallowed or inhaled.

FICTION: *Poisonings are not a great safety risk. People are hurt more often in cars, fires and other accidents.*

FACT: Poisonings happen more often than car accidents or house fires. That’s true especially among young children. Each year in the United States:

- About one million possible poisonings are reported for children younger than 6.
- Approximately 90 percent of poisonings occur in the home.

Many people don’t know about the poison risks linked to many products, so people are less careful about poison safety than about car or fire safety. It is important to be aware of the dangers of different poisons and take the same amount of care with poison safety as with other dangers.

SEASONAL TIPS – SUMMER

As the weather warms and we spend more time outside, families face new risks. Here are some tips to avoid poisonings that occur most often in summer.

Insect Spray or Lotion

- Be sure to follow the directions on the label on any insect repellent. Most contain DEET, which can harm children if used improperly or in large amounts.
- Do not allow children to apply repellent to themselves. Have an adult do this for them. When using repellent on a child, put a little on your own hands, then rub them on your child. Avoid the eyes and mouth. Use only a little around the ears.
- Use separate products when there is a need for insect spray and sunscreen. Do not use sunscreen that contains DEET. Repeatedly applying a product with DEET can increase the risk of harmful effects. Always follow the instructions on the label.
- For most products, wash treated skin with soap and water after returning indoors. Some labels give different advice.

Insect Bites

- Be alert to insects that may bite or sting. After a sting, the site will show redness and swelling. It may be itchy and painful. Be careful around bees, wasps, hornets and yellow jackets.

- Some people are allergic to insect stings. For these people, a sting may cause serious problems and even death. Go to a hospital right away if you are stung and have any of these signs: hives, dizziness, breathing trouble or swelling around eyes and mouth.

Snake Bites

- If a poisonous snake bites you or someone you know, call Poison Help right away.
- The experts at your poison center will determine if the snake is poisonous. They will tell you what signs to watch for and what to do.



- If the snake is not poisonous, you will need to wash the wound. You also may need a tetanus booster shot. Check with your doctor to find out.

Plants

- If you are allergic to poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac, touching it can cause blisters on your skin.



- Be sure that everyone in your family can identify these plants. Remember, “leaves of three, let it be.”
- If someone touches poison ivy, poison sumac or poison oak, rinse right away with plenty of running water for at least five minutes.
- Unless you are a plant expert, do not pick your own foods to eat in the wild.
- Poison hemlock and water hemlock can be fatal to people. Their roots, or tubers, can look like wild carrots or parsnips.

Food Poisoning

- Always wash hands and counters before preparing food. Use clean utensils for cooking and serving.
- Store food at the proper temperatures. Refrigerated foods cannot be left out at temperatures above 40 degrees F (5 degrees C). The following foods, and others, can quickly spoil and become unsafe: party platters, meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products, eggs, mayonnaise and cooked vegetables.
- Wash hands with hot, soapy water after handling raw meat, poultry or seafood. Wash cutting boards, utensils and dishes after use with these foods.
- Use a thermometer when cooking and reheating foods. That will help you to know when they are done and safe to eat.
- Do not let food sit out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Watch for signs of food poisoning. They include fever, headache, diarrhea, stomach pains, nausea and vomiting.

SEASONAL TIPS – FALL

Kids are back in school. Cold and flu season is here. Holidays are just around the corner. Here are some tips to help you prevent poisonings during this busy time of year.

Back to School

- Children often use glue, paint, ink and other art products at home, school and daycare. These art products are mixtures of the directions on their labels. They can be dangerous if not used correctly. Make sure children use art products safely.
- Young children are very likely to taste pretty, colorful art products. These art products are a mix of chemicals. If splashed into eyes or spilled onto skin, these products can harm children of any age.
- Handle art products according to the directions on the label. They will tell you how to use and store them safely. Read the warnings and pay attention to them.
- Art is an important part of early learning. The following safety tips should be followed when supervising children's use of art products.
 - ◇ Read the label carefully. Follow directions for safe use and disposal.
 - ◇ Throw away products that have expired. Keep art products in the containers they came in.
 - ◇ Do not eat or drink while using art products.
 - ◇ Wash skin after contact with art products. Clean equipment. Wipe tables, desks and counters.
 - ◇ Never use products for painting skin unless the product says it is safe to do so.
 - ◇ Never use products to decorate food unless the product says it is safe to do so.

FICTION: *Poison Help is important only for parents of young children.*

FACT: Poison Help is an important tool for adults and children. **Over 50 percent of possible poisonings occur in children younger than 6, BUT more than 70 percent of all poisoning deaths occur in adults ages 20 to 59.** Many adults are unaware that alcohol, medicines, and other products can poison you. Also, many adults do not guard against carbon monoxide. Poison Help can provide help with ANY poisoning situation, no matter your age. You can talk to an expert 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Berries

- Berries are often found on plants in the fall. Some berries can poison you.
- Berries may attract children. They may think these berries are just like the fruits at the grocery store.
- Some berries that can harm people do not harm birds and other animals.
- If you think someone ate one or more berries from a plant, call Poison Help right away. Poison center experts probably WON'T be able to identify the plant on the phone, so before a poisoning occurs, learn the names of plants around your home.
- A person at a greenhouse or plant nursery can help you identify the plant.



Spider Bites

- Most spider and tick bites do not cause harm, but there are some spiders that can cause illness in some people. Two common spiders that can harm you are the female black widow and the

brown recluse. A bite from one of these spiders can cause serious problems in a child, a senior or a person in poor health. These bites rarely cause death.

- The female black widow is a black, shiny spider. It has a red or orange hourglass shape on its underside. Within two hours after being bitten by the female, you may feel stomach pain, dizziness, and muscle stiffness. You may have trouble breathing.

FICTION: *Most poisonings can be avoided with basic common sense.*

FACT: Common sense and awareness are valuable in poison prevention, but it is important to actively learn about poison safety. More than 80 percent of events reported to poison centers are accidents. Most reports involve common household products (such as medicines, cleaning products and personal care products). Many people believe their common sense is enough to protect them. They mix medicines and keep products in unmarked containers. They do not install carbon monoxide alarms. They leave cabinets unlocked. Often, poisonings could have been avoided by learning about and following simple steps.

SEASONAL TIPS – WINTER

Many people think poinsettias and Christmas cacti are poisonous – they aren't. Here are some real dangers to watch out for in winter.

Antifreeze

- Antifreeze is a poisonous liquid used in cars. It has a sweet taste. Children and animals like its taste. If even a little is swallowed, it can be harmful. It can cause kidney damage and death.
- Keep antifreeze and all strong chemicals in the containers they came in. Cap them tightly. Store them in a locked cabinet.
- Before throwing away an antifreeze container, rinse it with water. Replace the safety cap. Place the container in the trash.

Salt

- If eaten, salt used on driveways and sidewalks in winter can harm a pet or child.
- Store such salt with other poisons. Keep it out of reach and in a locked cabinet.

Mercury

- Avoid using glass mercury thermometers. A glass thermometer can break in a child's mouth.
- Use a digital thermometer to avoid the risk of breaking glass.

- Stay with children when taking their temperature
- Mercury is a hazardous waste. Spilled mercury should be cleaned up properly. Call Poison Help or your local health department for advice.

FICTION: *The Poison Help number is only for emergencies. You should use it only when someone shows signs of poisoning.*

FACT: If you think someone has been poisoned, call Poison Help. **DON'T WAIT** for signs of poisoning. Many poisonings can be avoided with a call to the poison center. Your problem can most likely be solved on the phone. The medical experts will provide help with any possible poisoning, even if you are not sure a poisoning has occurred. Call Poison Help if you think your child may have swallowed poison.

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

- CO is a leading cause of poison deaths. Every year, CO poisoning results in hundreds of deaths. It causes many thousands of illnesses.
- CO is a poisonous gas. It has no color, odor or taste. All fuel-burning devices make CO. They do this mostly when they aren't working properly, or are not used in a ventilated space. CO can collect in closed areas.

People at greatest risk for CO poisoning are:

- Pregnant women.
- Infants.
- Young children.
- Older people.
- People with diseases that affect breathing.
- People with heart disease.

Sources of CO include:

- Gas furnaces.
- Gas water heaters.
- Gas stoves or ovens.
- Kerosene space heaters.
- Wood and gas fireplaces.
- Wood-burning stoves.
- Power generators.
- Car engines.

Signs of CO poisoning are similar to signs common to flu and some cold-weather viruses:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Headaches



To prevent CO poisonings in your home:

- Have at least one CO alarm in your home. The best places for a CO alarm are near bedrooms and close to furnaces. Make sure batteries in CO alarms are replaced often.
- Have your heating system, vents, and chimney checked every year by experts prior to turning them on.
- Always follow product instructions for installing and repairing appliances that burn fuel.
- Never burn charcoal inside a house or garage.
- Never use a gas oven to heat a house or apartment.
- Never use unvented fuel-burning devices in a house or apartment.
- Never run a car in a closed garage.

Poison Look-Alikes



Safe to Drink: Blue sports drinks

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Windshield-wiper fluid
- Mouthwash
- Dishwasher rinse agent



Safe to Eat: Mini chocolate bars

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Laxatives



Safe to Use: Toothpaste

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Denture adhesive
- Glitter glue



Safe to Drink: Apple juice

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Mouthwash
- Household cleaner

Each year, children mistake common household items such as mouthwash, cleaning products and medicine for candy, foods and drinks they enjoy. Talk to your children about how household products can be poisons if they drink or swallow substances that are not meant to be ingested. **Keep poisons locked up!**



Safe to Eat: Candy

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Mice pellets
- Chewable cold medicine



Safe to Eat: Candy

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Calcium supplement
- chewable tablets



Safe to Eat: Candy-coated chocolates

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Ibuprofen tablets
- Iron supplement tablets
- Aspirin tablets



Safe to Eat: Gummy bears

Poison Look-Alikes:

- Gummy vitamins. These are OK when taken as directed, but too many can be dangerous for kids.

Why should I worry about poisoning?

Every day we use medicines, chemicals and other products at home and work. Many of these products can be poisons. A poison is anything that can harm you if it is:

- Used in the wrong way.
- Used by the wrong person.
- Used in the wrong amount.

Often poisons harm you when you don't expect it. When a poison harms someone, that's called poisoning. Most poisonings happen when poisons:

- Are swallowed.
- Come in contact with the skin.
- Are splashed in the eyes.
- Are breathed in or inhaled.

Poisoning is a leading public health problem. It does not just happen to children. It can happen to anyone, at any time and in any place. Poisoning is much more common than most people think.

Poison Help is a free phone service connecting callers to their local poison centers. When accidents happen with chemicals or medicine, call Poison Help (800.222.1222). Get help right away from a nurse, pharmacist or other poison expert. If someone has trouble breathing, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency ambulance number right away.

Visit Poison Help online at:



Local Contact



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