

Poisoning Prevention

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POISONING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY DEATH in the United States (www.cdc.org). Every day, over 300 children under the age of 19 are treated in emergency rooms for poisoning. Two of these children die (www.cdc.org). In fact, the number of children dying from poisoning has doubled since 1999 (www.safekids.org). Poisons can be found in many household items, from cosmetics and personal care items to cleaning products and houseplants. Nine out of ten poisoning exposures to children occur in the home, and nearly 90% of child poisoning deaths are drug-related. Statistics show that 883% of children who died in 2011 from poisoning were between 15-19 years old, and 73% were boys (www.safekids.org). Helping clients prevent poisoning is another value-added service of the professional insurance agent.

Avoid telling a child that “medicine tastes like candy”. Child resistant packaging is not child proof. Store all medications out of sight and reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet. Emergency room records indicate that the most common places children find pills is on the floor, misplaced, in a purse, on a counter or nightstand, or in a pill bag or box. The medication was found in a cabinet or drawer in only 6% of the cases. Properly dispose of unneeded and expired medications.

E-cigarettes and liquid nicotine are new sources of potential poisoning. These products are not currently regulated by the Food & Drug Administration. Inhaling or spilling the liquid on skin when refilling the e-cigarette can cause nausea or eye irritation. One man committed suicide by injecting the liquid (www.cnn.com). Of particular concern is that the bright colors and fruit flavors and smells are very attractive to children. The pro-

posed Child Nicotine Poison Prevention Act of 2014 would require childproof containers and to allow regulation by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (www.aapcc.org).

Six people per day die from alcohol poisoning, caused by drinking large quantities in a short period of time or binge drinking.

It is interesting to note that these victims are predominantly non-Hispanic white middle-aged men, and not college students. Alcohol dependence or alcoholism is linked to 30% of these deaths (www.usnews.com). Unfinished drinks or open liquor bottles should not be left where curious children can taste them.

Pesticides and cleaning chemicals should be stored in their original, labeled containers. Read the labels about use and application, and wear protective clothing when handling. Whenever possible, switch to safer nontoxic methods for cleaning and disease or pest control. For example, vinegar works wonders as a cleaner. Some chemicals are so toxic that just a drop on the skin can be lethal. If someone is exposed to chemicals or pesticides, remove them from the exposure immediately. Take off contaminated clothing and wash off any skin that has been exposed. Different chemicals can affect the body differently, so be sure to let medical personnel know what type of chemical was involved.

Read the label for proper disposal of medications, cleaning supplies and other chemicals such as pesticides. Flushing them down the drain is not a good idea,



and is illegal in many jurisdictions. Many municipalities offer regular household hazardous waste disposal.

Poisonings can be treated safely at home. If poisoning is suspected, contact a local poison control center. The national helpline number is 1-800-222-1222. The 55 centers are available 24/7. Helping clients protect themselves and their family members against accidental poisoning is another value-added service of the true insurance professional.

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