



Poisoning

Poisons are harmful substances that are swallowed, inhaled, or that come in contact with the skin. Each year about 10 million poisonings occur; 80% of them are in children under five years old.

Signs & Symptoms

Signs and symptoms depend on the substance. They include a skin rash, upset stomach, and more severe problems. Some poisons can cause death.

Causes

Things Not Meant to Be Swallowed or Inhaled

- Household cleaners, such as bleach, drain cleaners, ammonia, and lye.
- Insecticides. Rat poison.
- Gasoline. Antifreeze. Oil. Lighter fluid. Paint thinner.
- Lead.
- Airplane glue. Formaldehyde.
- Rubbing alcohol. Iodine. Hair dye. Mouthwash. Mothballs.
- Some indoor and outdoor plants.
- Carbon monoxide. This has no color, odor, or taste.

Things That Are Poisonous in Harmful Amounts

- Alcohol. Drugs. Over-the-counter and prescribed medicines.
- Medicinal herbs.
- Vitamins and minerals. Iron in these can be deadly to a small child.

See also **Food Poisoning** and **Bites & Stings** at www.HealthyLearn.com.

Questions to Ask

Is the person unconscious, having convulsions, or not breathing? **{Note: See **First Aid For Unconsciousness**; **First Aid For Seizures with Convulsion**; and **Rescue Breathing** at www.HealthyLearn.com.}**



NO

After being in a closed space with a heater or furnace on, are **signs of carbon monoxide poisoning** present?

- Lethargy. Confusion. Agitation.
- Sudden shortness of breath.
- Severe headache. Abdominal pain.
- Seizure.
- Chest pain or irregular heartbeat.
- **Signs of shock.** (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)



NO

Do any of these problems occur?

- Pulse rate is 140 or more beats per minute or 40 or fewer beats per minute.
- Shortness of breath. Breathing 10 or fewer breaths per minute. Time lapses of more than 8 seconds between breaths.
- Any change in mental status.
- Hallucinations.



{Note: First, call Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222.}

NO

Has any substance been swallowed, inhaled, or absorbed by the skin that has “Harmful or fatal if swallowed” or a skull-and-crossbones sign on the label? Or, did the person take a substance that could be poisonous.



{Note: First, call Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222.}



See Self-Care / First Aid on next page



Treatment

Treatment depends on the poison and its effects.

Information to give the Poison Control Center, emergency department, etc.:

- The name of the substance taken.
- The amount and when it was taken.
- A list of ingredients on the label.
- Age, gender, and weight of the person who took the poison. How the person is feeling and reacting. Any medical problems the person has.



Get more information from:

National Poison Control Center
800.222.1222

www.poisonprevention.org

Home Safety Council®
www.homesafetycouncil.org

Poisoning, Continued

Self-Care / First Aid

For Swallowed Poisons

1. If the person is unconscious, shout for help. **Call 9-1-1!**
2. For a conscious person, call the Poison Control Center (800.222.1222). Follow instructions. Do not give Syrup of Ipecac to induce vomiting unless the Poison Control Center tells you to. {**Note:** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents *don't* give Syrup of Ipecac to children.}
3. Lay the person on his or her left side to keep the windpipe clear, especially if the person vomited. Keep a sample of the vomit and the poison container.

For Inhaled Poisons

1. Protect yourself. Move the person to fresh air (outdoors if you can). Try not to breathe the fumes yourself.
2. Follow steps 1 and 2 above for **Swallowed Poisons**. Get medical care.

For Chemical Poisons on Skin

1. Protect yourself. Flood the skin with water for 5 or more minutes. Remove clothing that was in contact with the person.
2. Gently wash the skin with soap and water. Rinse well. Get medical care.

Prevention

- Buy household products, vitamins, and medicines in child-resistant packaging. Keep these and all poisons out of children's reach.
- Put child-resistant latches on cabinet doors. Follow instructions for use and storage of pesticides, household cleaners, and other poisons.
- Keep products in original containers. Don't transfer them to soft drink bottles, plastic jugs, etc.
- Teach children not to take medicine and vitamins unless an adult gives it to them. Don't call these "candy" in front of a child.
- Wear protective clothing, masks, etc., when using chemicals that could cause harm if inhaled or absorbed by the skin.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home and garage.