

Protecting Your Child from Poison

Each year, about 91,000 children suffer from accidental poisonings. While the majority of these cases are not fatal, they are avoidable. Knowing basic types of household poisons, and where they can be found in your home, is the first step to poison prevention.

Start by becoming familiar with different products in your home, as poisons may be hard to detect and come in a variety of forms. Focus on child-proofing key places that contain toxic materials. It's easier to do than you might think.

In observance of National Poison Prevention Week, March 15-21, First 5 Contra Costa provides the [following information](#) to raise awareness and to provide resources about this important issue.

Poison Comes in Many Forms

To help you determine the types of poisons present in your own home, the following list includes four primary forms of poisons and provides some examples of each.

- **Liquid.** Liquid medications and cleaning supplies such as bleach and laundry detergent are harmful if a child swallows them.
- **Solid.** Medications in pill form can be toxic if a child swallows or chews them. Other common household items, such as soap, are hazardous to children if eaten.
- **Spray.** Many cleaning products such as all-purpose cleaners come in spray bottles. Perfumes and pesticides can also be dangerous to a child.
- **Invisible.** Lead and carbon monoxide are examples of invisible poisons that are common health hazards. Lead is found in dust from lead-based paint as well as in some toys. Carbon monoxide is emitted from cars, gas ovens and space heaters. To help reduce these poisons, make sure your home always gets enough fresh air. Also, consider installing a low-cost carbon monoxide detector that signals when levels are too high.

Click [here](#) for more information about common poison dangers in the home as well as helpful resources. We have also created a flyer to distribute to local families with this information in English and Spanish.

Danger Zones in Your Home

To safeguard your child against potential poisoning, start by focusing on a few important rooms in your home. Remember that most items are best kept out of sight and reach of your child.

- **Kitchen/Laundry Room.** Keep household cleaners like dishwasher soap, detergent and oven cleaners in a cabinet with child-proof locks. If you store them in a cupboard, make sure they are high enough that children cannot reach them.
- **Bathroom.** Cabinets and drawers may contain products like medication, vitamins, hair products, rubbing alcohol, and even nail polish that can be

dangerous to children. Put them in the medicine cabinet only if it is out of reach. Otherwise, lock them in a cabinet or drawer.

- **Bedroom.** Clear nightstand of medications or creams. Be cautious of where you leave your purse since it may contain many items that can be harmful to children if eaten, including cosmetics, lotions, medications, and cigarettes. Also, be aware of your child's toys since some may contain lead as well.
- **Garden.** Many household and outdoor plants as well as fertilizer and pesticides can be poisonous. Keep plants above reach, and teach your child not to put plants in his or her mouth. Always look for plants that are not harmful like herbs, jasmine or roses. And after applying fertilizer, water and dry the lawn completely before letting your child play on the grass. Don't forget to always wash your hands after gardening.
- **Walls.** Some older houses are painted with lead-based paint. Children may breathe the dust from this paint or swallow small flakes of paint. Test your home for lead to ensure your child is safe.

Resources Available to Help

Keep these resources nearby to help in the event of an accidental poisoning.

- **California Poison Action Line.** If a child is not breathing after ingesting poison, call 911. If the child is alert, call the California Poison Action Line at 1-800-222-1222. Have as much information as possible available, like the name of the product and time of poisoning.
- ***Kit for New Parents.*** This free resource, a \$75 value, includes instructional DVDs, guide books and helpful brochures with parenting information, advice and useful tips. The *Kit* also includes the California Poison Action hotline telephone number on a magnet to keep on the refrigerator door. To get your *Kit*, call 1-800-KIDS-025 or contact the Child Abuse Prevention Council (925) 755-4200.
- **Environmental Protection Agency.** To learn about how to test your home for lead, call 1-800-424-LEAD or visit www.epa.gov/lead.
- **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.** Call 1-800-638-2772 or visit www.cpsc.gov to get a list of toys that have been recalled due to lead and other hazards.