Prevent Poisoning in the Home: How to Protect Your Child

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March 21-27 is National Poison Prevention Week, so we want to make sure that parents know how to keep their kids safe.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 2 million ingestions of potentially toxic substances are reported to poison control centers in the U.S. every year. Many of these exposures involve children under the age of 19.

There are many items in homes that can be toxic to kids, such as medications, cleaning products, alcohol, and even cosmetics. Magnets, button batteries, and laundry pods can be dangerous if ingested by younger children since they are easy-to-access household items. If your child happens to consume one of these, they need to receive medical attention quickly.

COVID-19 has impacted the types of poisoning reported in children and adolescents over the last year. Dr. Wendy Stephan, health education coordinator at the Florida Poison Information Center, notes that according to a recent study, there was a surge of reported poisonings in children due to cleaners and disinfectants, such as bleach and hand sanitizer. Always store these items safely. (See tips below.) Families can also prevent these poisonings by using only one cleaner at a time to avoid potentially
dangerous reactions between cleaning products.

**Have you started taking melatonin, vitamin D, and vitamin C to try to boost your immune system to avoid COVID-19?**

Florida’s Poison Control Centers have recently received more calls about dietary supplements. Be careful because these supplements can be harmful when not taken at the recommended dose. Please check with your physician before taking any supplements and make sure to read the packaging closely and only take these supplements, and all medications, as directed.

Another important issue related to poisoning in the South Florida area is the legalization of medical cannabis edibles. With more available legal medical cannabis, there have been many more exposures leading to poisoning over the past three years. And these numbers are only increasing. If someone in your family is using medical cannabis edibles, keep them stored out of the reach of children.

**Most ingestions of poisons occur in the child’s home.**

To avoid poisonings, make sure to follow these steps below:

- Keep all poisonous substances up and away, out of reach of children. You can use locks on high cabinets to help
make extra sure kids can’t get to the dangerous items in your home.

- Make sure items such as medications, and household cleaners are always in their original labeled containers.
- Medications should always be stored in childproof containers. Visitors to your home might keep medications or other dangerous items in their purses or bags. Make sure those are out of your kids’ reach too.

What should you do if your child does get exposed to poison in your home?

- Poison control centers are here to help for emergencies involving poisons/medication mistakes.
- A quick call to poison control (1-800-222-1222) can save a family trip to the emergency department.
- Calls are fully confidential – no one gets in trouble for calling poison control.

For more information about how to keep your child safe from poisonings in the home, reach out to the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Miami at 305-243-9080.

READ MORE
Should I Get a Physical Exam?

“Discussing a family history of diabetes, cancer, or genetic disorders can make an early diagnosis possible,” Dr. Schwartz says. “Simple tests such as a urinalysis or a hemoglobin A1C to screen for diabetes, for example, are effective screening tools that can help you stay healthy before a disease even makes itself known.” Read more.