Preventing Accidental Poisoning

Coming in contact with poisons may not be something you think about on a day-to-day basis, but in fact, you are probably in contact with some common household items that are just like poison if handled incorrectly or accidentally ingested.

**Medications** | This is one of the largest categories for accidental poisonings. Medicines, if taken improperly can often have some of the same effect as taking a poison. Remember these tips:

- Taking a larger-than-suggested dose does NOT mean faster/better results. Stick to the instructions.
- Read the labels before taking – Sounds simple, but so often, we skip this step and could miss information about dangerous drug or food interactions
- Keep medicines in their original bottles/containers – Pill organizers are helpful, but you may forget which medication is which, or leave it where a child could reach it (they are often not child resistant)
- See the light – If you are taking medicine at night, take an extra second to turn on the lights and make sure you have the right dosage and drug
- Keep medicines where kids can’t reach them and keep them separated from food items – child “resistant” doesn’t mean they won’t find a way to get into the container
- Double check the markings on dosage cups/spoons – giving someone the wrong dosage could be harmful

**Household Chemicals/Cleaning Products**

- Don’t mix cleaning products as you might create toxic fumes
- Be aware of look-alikes. Many non-food products have “twins” that look just like something delicious. See the delicious-looking hard candy on the right? It’s actually a highly concentrated detergent pod. Here are a few other look-alikes to check for in your home:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food item</th>
<th>Looks just like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple juice</td>
<td>Pine cleaner, candle oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue sports drink</td>
<td>Glass cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate bar</td>
<td>Laxative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy coated chocolates (like M&amp;Ms)</td>
<td>Cold medicines, iron supplements, pain relievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy “tablets” (like Smarties or Pez)</td>
<td>Antacids or vitamins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Plants** | As the names suggest, poison oak, poison ivy and poison sumac can cause irritation (sometimes severe) to a person’s skin when they have direct contact. Here are a few more plants that can cause severe reactions if eaten (so do not use for garnish, or in a floral display that is placed near food):

- Narcissus – sometimes confused with onions
- Bittersweet Nightshade – has colorful berries
- Rhododendron (Azalea) – can cause many symptoms including slow/irregular heart beat

Keep the poison control number (800-222-2222) near your phone at home and program it to your mobile phone. If you need to call, stay calm and have details ready: what was taken, when and how much was ingested, and the age and weight of the victim. Everyone is susceptible to poisoning, but children are especially at risk—get a “child’s-eye” view of your home and see what temptations are in their path ... then remove them.

Visit [Allstate Be Aware and Prepare](#) and the [Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety](#) for more, helpful information.

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