HRSA
Health Resources & Services Administration

Poison Help

When accidents happen with chemicals or medicine, call Poison Help.

Get help right away from a nurse, pharmacist, or other poison expert.

PoisonHelp.HRSA.gov • 1-800-222-1222

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES · USA

Why should I worry about poisoning?

Every day we use medicines, chemicals, and other products at home and work.

Many of these products can be poisons. A poison is anything that can harm you if it is:

- used in the wrong way
- used by the wrong person
- used in the wrong amount

Often poisons harm you when you don't expect it.

When a poison harms someone, that's called poisoning. Most poisonings happen when poisons

- are swallowed
- come in contact with the skin
- are splashed in the eyes
- are breathed in or inhaled

Poisoning is a leading public health problem.

It does not just happen to children. It can happen to anyone, at any time and in any place. Poisoning is much more common than most people think.

Poison Help

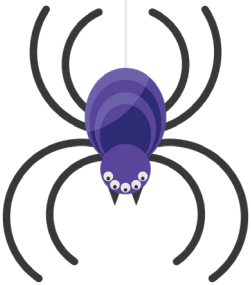
1-800-222-1222

Poison Help is a free phone service connecting callers to their local poison control centers.

When accidents happen with chemicals or medicine, call Poison Help (1-800-222-1222).

Get help right away from a nurse, pharmacist, or other poison expert. If someone has trouble breathing, call 911 or your local emergency ambulance number right away.

Some Common Poisoning Risks



- cleaning products
- vitamins and food supplements, like minerals and herbs
- medicines
- cigarettes and cigarette butts
- beauty products, perfumes, and nail polish removers
- carbon monoxide gas (CO) (usually from cars and heating devices)
- insect sprays, weed killers, and plant food
- car care products (such as antifreeze, wiper fluid, and motor oil)
- alcohol or drugs of abuse (such as pain killers and cocaine)
- plants in the house and yard
- animal bites and stings

Tips to Prevent Poisonings

- Buy products that children can't open easily. Be aware that child-resistant caps are not risk free. Once a child learns how to open containers with these caps, they will not keep a child safe. A child will only take longer to open them.
- Keep medicines, cleaners, and other poisons out of sight. Keep them in cabinets that are locked or in cabinets that children can't open.
- Be careful when using medicines, cleaners, and other poisons. Don't leave them open when you answer the phone or doorbell. Replace the cap. Take the product with you. Poisonings can happen in just a few seconds.
- Always keep products in the containers they came in.
- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home.
- Never take medicine in the dark.
- Be careful when taking more than one medicine. Read the labels to avoid an overdose. When taking more than one medicine at a time, make sure it's safe to take them together. If you have a question about medicines, call Poison Help (1-800-222-1222).

Keep the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, near your phone. Or enter it into speed dial so that it is quickly available.

If you think someone has been poisoned, Remember:

1 Keep Calm

Help is as near as your phone. Keeping calm will help you understand the advice and help the victim.

2 Check the condition of the victim.

Call 911 right away if the person:

- has collapsed (is unconscious)
- has severe pain in the chest
- is having trouble breathing
- shows other life-threatening signs

3 Call Poison Help (1-800-222-1222) even if there are no signs of poisoning.

Try to identify what poison is involved. If it is a product, bring its container to the phone.

4 A nurse, pharmacist, or other poison expert will answer your call to Poison Help.

Be ready to tell the person:

- the name of the product
- the age and weight of the victim
- the amount of product involved
- what signs of poisoning you notice

5 A poison expert will decide if the person is in danger.

The poison expert will give you the advice you need. The poison control center may stay on the phone with you while you get help, or call you later to follow up.

6 Most calls can be handled at home.

If you need a doctor or ambulance, the poison expert will tell you right away.