

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Poisons

Poisoning is one of the most common childhood injuries. Every year in NSW, more than 3000 children present to hospital as a result of poisoning from products found in and around the home. Most accidental poisonings happen to children younger than five years old, with children aged one to three years most at risk.

What can be poisonous to children?

There are many products in and around the home that may be poisonous to children. They include:

- medicines
- eucalyptus and other essential oils
- batteries
- insect and weed killers
- dishwasher detergents
- laundry products
- cleaning products
- iron and potassium tablets

Why are young children more likely to be poisoned?

Young children are exploring their world but are unaware of potential dangers. They are curious, and will often put things in their mouth to explore their taste and texture.

When do poisonings happen?

Poisonings can happen at any time. Often they occur:

- When normal family routine is changed e.g. holidays, moving house or having visitors.
- When chemicals or cleaners are transferred from their original containers such as an old drink bottle or food container.

- When medicines are not stored safely, for example, in handbags, beside the bed at night or in the fridge.

How can you prevent poisoning?

- Closely supervise children, especially visitors, around the home
- When giving medicine to children, always follow the instructions on the label.
- Buy products in child resistant containers, but remember that the lids are not completely childproof – a curious and determined child may eventually open these containers.
- Always make sure that the child resistant lid is on properly after each use.
- Store all poisons including medicines, cleaning products and chemicals in their original containers that are clearly labelled.
- Place containers in a child resistant locked cupboard that is at least 1.5 metres above ground.
- Return poisons to their safe storage area immediately after use. Do not leave them out on a bench or counter.
- Check all items which may contain button batteries and make sure they have a screw closure on the battery compartment, or store safely out of reach of children. Take care when changing button batteries not to leave them around and make sure they are disposed of quickly in a bin which children cannot access.
- Be extra vigilant when normal family routine is changed e.g. going on holidays, moving house, having visitors and during family disruptions

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- Dispose of unwanted household chemicals – contact the EPA Clean Out line for details 131 555 or go to www.cleanout.com.au.
 - Take any unwanted or out-of-date medicines to your local pharmacy so they can throw them away.
 - Don't call medicines 'lollies' and, if possible, avoid children watching you take, or give, medicines to others.
 - Keep handbags out of a child's reach if storing medicine or other poisons in your handbag.
 - Save the Poisons Information Centre phone number 131126 in your mobile phone.
 - Check that the plants in your garden are not poisonous. Ask your local nursery, call Kids Health for a fact sheet or visit the Poisons Information Centre website at www.chw.edu.au/poisons for basic plant safety information.
 - For general home safety, see our Home Safety Checklist http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/kidshealth/safety_fact_sheets

First Aid for poisoning

The Poison Information centre offers free medical advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26

Swallowed poison

- Do not try to make the patient vomit.
- Pick up the container and take it to the telephone.
- Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.

Poison on the skin

- Remove poisoned clothing, taking care to avoid contact with the poison.
- Wash the skin with lots of cool running water.
- Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.

Poison in the eye

- Wash the eye with water from a cup, jug or slowly running tap.
- Continue for 10-15 minutes, holding the eyelids open.
- Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.

Inhaled poison

- Get the child to fresh air quickly, without placing yourself at risk.
- Open doors and windows wide, if it is safe to do so.
- Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.