Poison Safety

Key Facts
- Each year, more than 100 children ages 14 years and under die as a result of unintentional poisoning.¹

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<th>Total Poison Deaths, children 0-14 years</th>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>Deaths</td>
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- Each year, there are more than 91,000 nonfatal poisonings to children that are treated in hospital emergency rooms.²
- More than 1.2 million unintentional poisonings among children ages 5 years and under were reported to U.S. poison control centers in 2004.³
- In 2005, nearly 63,000 drug poisonings happened to children under age 5 years.⁴
- Non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants, foreign bodies and toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol are responsible for 56 percent of poisoning exposures for children under 5 years of age.⁵
- Each year, an estimated seven children ages 14 years and under are fatally poisoned by exposure to carbon monoxide (CO).⁶
- Lead poisoning is the number one environmental hazard threatening children throughout the United States, affecting an estimated 310,000 children under the age of six.

Who, Where, When and How
- For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately 9 occur in the home.⁷
- Calls to poison control centers peak between 4 - 11 p.m., especially during warmer months.⁸
- Children are poisoned by household and personal care products, medicines, vitamins, pesticides, plants, lead, and carbon monoxide.⁹
- Among children under 5 years of age, more than half of poisoning exposures are by products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants, toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol; 44 percent of poison exposures are attributed to medicines.¹⁰ ¹¹
- Children ages 5 years and under are at greatest risk for nonfatal poisoning.¹²
How This Relates to Babyproofing

- CO detectors are effective in preventing residential CO poisoning and should be installed. It is estimated that CO detectors may prevent half of such deaths.\textsuperscript{13} \textsuperscript{14}
- Prevention of poisoning is an important reason for the installation of door latches, cabinet latches.
- Child Safe boxes are useful for storing poisonous items on high shelves or for medicines in the refrigerator or night stand.

Tips For Parents

- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medicine effectively reduces the poisoning mortality rate among children ages 4 years and under.\textsuperscript{15} \textsuperscript{16} \textsuperscript{17}
- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medications has saved an estimated 460 deaths among children under age 4 years from 1974 through 1992.\textsuperscript{18} \textsuperscript{19} \textsuperscript{20} \textsuperscript{21}
- The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act of 2000 established funding for a national toll-free 24-hour hotline: \textbf{1-800-222-1222 (This number should be posted by each phone)}
- Anything that is not intended for a child to ingest may be a potential poison. Even those things intended for children may be toxic in excess – vitamins for example.
- Don't take medicine in front of children
- Store medicines, etc. in original containers
- Consider storing up high but watch for climbers
- Never call medicine candy.
- Learn about common poisonous houseplants and those in your geographic area from your local poison center.

Syrup of Ipecac Update from the AAP\textsuperscript{22}

The AAP now recommends that syrup of ipecac no longer be used at home by parents or caregivers. (The AAP previously advised that parents keep a 1-ounce bottle of syrup of ipecac in the home to induce vomiting for poisonings).

- Parents should throw out syrup of ipecac that is currently in their home in a safe manner, such as flushing it down the toilet. Parents who live in rural or remote areas should still discard any syrup of ipecac in their homes.
- There are several reasons behind the new recommendation. Most importantly, there has never been any evidence that vomiting helps children who eat or drink something poisonous. Also, most emergency rooms have stopped using ipecac in favor of activated charcoal - which binds to poison in the stomach and prevents them from entering the bloodstream. Continued vomiting caused by syrup of ipecac may later result in the child being unable to tolerate activated charcoal or other poison treatments.
There was never any evidence that giving syrup of ipecac to children to make them vomit decreased death rates due to poisoning. It was a practice based on intuition rather than science. Doctors and parents just assumed that vomiting removes poison from a child's body. For many years, that assumption was never tested or researched. But in the past few years, scientific tests and research have shown vomiting will not help a child who has swallowed a poisonous substance.
