

Poison Prevention

Each year in the U.S. thousands of people suffer from accidental poisoning. They often require emergency medical care.

Household poisonings involve carbon monoxide fumes, cleaning products, cosmetics and personal care products, pesticides, medications and plants.

Poisonings are usually associated with young children, but also can involve adults and senior citizens.



Healthy home tips on poison prevention

- ✓ Protect your family against carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector near the bedroom area of your home and have your heating system inspected every fall.
- ✓ Store chemicals and medications in their original containers. Original containers for these products contain information that may be needed in a poisoning. In addition, medicines and chemicals that have been transferred to an unlabeled container may be difficult to identify. Use of food containers like drinking glasses, cups or soda cans to store pesticide solutions, cleaning compounds, or solvents can result in an accidental poisoning.
- ✓ Read and follow product labels. Learn to use label information to select products that are safe for your home and the environment. If you have questions about the use and disposal of a product, call the manufacturer.
- ✓ When buying chemicals, buy only as much as you need for the job you plan to do. Although buying a larger quantity may save you a few dollars, storing left over toxic chemicals in your home is not a good idea.
- ✓ Never mix household chemicals that contain chlorine bleach with products that contain acids or ammonia. These chemicals can combine to form deadly chlorine gas.
- ✓ Use the Wisconsin Poison Center as a resource. Post their number near each telephone in your home. Call the Poison Center if you have questions about a toxic substance or possible poisoning (1-800-222-1222), anywhere in Wisconsin.

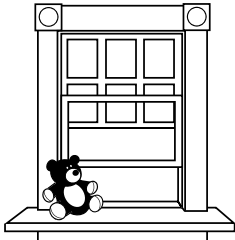
Prevent childhood poisonings

- ✓ Store toxic chemicals in locked cabinets or above counter level. All cleaning products, toiletries, pesticides, and paint products should be stored out of the sight and reach of small children.
- ✓ Store vitamins, iron pills, and other medications in locked cabinets. Hide the key in a separate location.
- ✓ Buy products that are packaged in child-resistant containers (this delays access; it doesn't prevent it).
- ✓ Keep poisonous plants out of small children's reach. Learn about the plants in your home and yard. Some very common ones, such as philodendrons, dieffenbachias and lilly of the valley, are poisonous. Consider loaning toxic houseplants to a friend or taking them to work until your toddler is older.

Handling and storing toxic chemicals

Cleaning products, lawncare chemicals, insecticides, paint removers or thinners, and medications are found in most homes. When used for their intended purpose, these products can make our lives easier and more enjoyable. However when they are used inappropriately or ingested by a curious child, these chemicals can cause serious health problems or death.





**look out
FOR LEAD**

Living with lead-based paint

If your home was built before 1978 it may contain lead-based paint or varnish.

Dust or chips from lead-based paint can easily poison preschool-aged children. Children under 36 months of age are at highest risk. If they play near windows or other places with worn out or damaged paint, they can get dust on their fingers and toys.

Childhood exposure to lead causes problems with learning, growth and behavior that can last an entire lifetime.

Adult exposure to lead can affect pregnancy success and blood pressure regulation.

Healthy home tips on lead

- ✓ Have preschool-age children tested for lead. Most children with lead poisoning don't look sick. The only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is to have a blood test. Your local health department, clinic or doctor can give your child a blood test for lead. All preschool-age children who live in or regularly visit older homes (e.g. daycare, babysitter's or relative's home) should be tested. If your child's blood lead level is high more tests will be done to be sure the lead level is coming down.
- ✓ Clean up chips and dust from leaded paint. If you can, use a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuum for this purpose. Ask your local health department where you can find a HEPA vacuum to borrow.
- ✓ Control lead dust by damp dusting hard surfaces, wet mopping floors and vacuuming carpets frequently. Wash dust rags separate from other laundry items or throw them away.
- ✓ Focus on window wells and woodwork. Use paper towels, warm water and soap (any household cleaner will work) to wash dust and loose paint chips from window wells and woodwork. Rinse well.
- ✓ Don't allow children to play or sleep in areas that are contaminated with chips or dust from lead paint.
- ✓ Wash children's hands often. This is especially important before meals and snacks, and after playing outdoors, and before nap or bedtime.
- ✓ Choose foods that are high in calcium and iron. These minerals help to prevent lead absorption.

- ✓ Never disturb old paint when children are present. Keep children away from the home while you work on deteriorated painted surfaces.
- ✓ Never dry scrape, dry sand or use a heat gun or torch to remove old paint. These methods can increase your family's exposure to lead. Instead, use a spray bottle with water and wet down the surfaces where you're going to remove loose paint. Make sure to clean up the paint chips and dust immediately.
- ✓ Call your local health department or the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (608) 266-5817 for more information.

Mercury in your home

Many common household items such as thermometers, thermostats, electrical switches, fluorescent light bulbs, and smoke detectors can contain traces of mercury. When these items are broken, burned, or tampered with the mercury can be released into the air of your home. Breathing air that contains mercury can cause nerve and kidney damage.

Healthy home tips on mercury

- ✓ Avoid buying items that contain mercury. Look for safer substitutes such as alcohol-filled or digital thermometers.
- ✓ If a thermometer breaks in your home, clean the mercury up carefully, double wrap it in plastic and discard it in your household trash. Do not vacuum up mercury droplets. This can cause dangerous levels of mercury vapors to be released into the air.
- ✓ Contact your local health department immediately for assistance with spills of more than a teaspoon of mercury. These spills require special cleanup procedures.

Hazardous household waste

Take advantage of annual "clean sweeps" that may be sponsored by your local community to get rid of toxic household wastes like leftover paints, solvents, and pesticides. Take used motor oil and batteries to community drop off sites for recycling. The city or county waste manager can tell you where your nearest drop off site is located.