

A POISONING CAN HAPPEN TO YOU ...at any age

by Gail Banach, MEd;
Director of Education, Central NY Poison Center



About half of the poisoning calls to the Central NY Poison Center involve children. However, the Center also helps teens, adults, and senior citizens with drug interactions, suicide attempts, medication errors, substance abuse, chemical spills, and occupational exposures. Pet owners call too, when their dog, cat or bird has been poisoned. Highly trained Poison Information Specialists provide expert treatment advice and guidance immediately. School nurses should not hesitate to contact the Poison Center for expeditious, accurate information about ingestion, absorption or contamination of any substance.

To find the Poison Center in your area, go to the website <http://www.aapcc.org/findyour.htm>. There are three ways to find out about Poison Centers in your area. You can click on a map and find Poison Centers in your state, enter your zip code, or look in a directory to find out which Poison Center serves your area.

To print out an 8" x 11" poster for your office, or a hand-out to teens who babysit, on poisons to be alert to and action to take, go to this site: <http://www.aapcc.org/factsheets/teenfactsheet.pdf>

New policies of the American Academy of Pediatricians are:

- The first action for a care giver of a child who may have ingested a toxic substance is to call the local Poison Center for help by dialing 1-800-222-1222.
- Syrup of ipecac should no longer be used routinely as a poison treatment intervention in the home. Pediatricians and other professionals who care for children should advise parents to dispose of the syrup of ipecac currently in their homes.

Abuse of Cold Preparations

Currently, there is widespread abuse among teens of cough and cold preparations containing dextromethorphan. The American Association of Poison Control Centers has reviewed data about dextromethorphan abuse and misuse from 2000 to 2003. These represent cases about which poison centers were consulted. Teenagers were involved in 1,623 cases in 2000, increasing steadily each year until 2003, when they were involved in 3,271 cases. For all ages, including teens aged 13–19, the number also increased, from 2,523 in 2000 to 4,382 in 2003 (source: CNY Poison Center, Syracuse, NY). 🍷

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gail Banach, MEd is currently the Director of Education at the Central NY Poison Center at Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, NY. She serves on the Public Education, Certification Review, Outcome-Based Criteria and Abstract Review Committees of the American Association of Poison Centers, as well as the Certification Task Force. In 2004, Banach was the recipient of the AAPCC Educator Research Award.

A day at the Poison Center:

- A father of a 2-year-old called. He just gave his daughter a dose of her antibiotic ear medication, which was double the dose he was supposed to give her.
 - Home manageable, thanks to our service.
- An Emergency Department called to ask for help identifying a mixture of pills found in a vial brought in by a patient who came to the hospital with symptoms.
 - We provided pill identification so they could treat the patient.
- A mom called to ask if the lily plant her daughter and her cat ate was poisonous.
 - The plant was non-toxic for the daughter, but toxic for the cat. We suggested she call the vet for specific information.
- A school nurse called. A 13-year-old female student took 30 Tylenol tablets. As there were no symptoms, the school principal suggested the parents take her home to "sleep it off."
 - The Poison Information Specialist called the principal to assure him that a trip to the hospital was necessary, due to possible liver damage.
- A 63-year-old called to say he was taking a pain reliever and wanted to know if he could take a cold preparation too.
 - He was surprised to find out that there are 325 milligrams of pain reliever in the cold medicine, more than the amount in the tablet of pain reliever he was taking!
- An 11-year-old was found using an inhalant product on the school bus.
 - Unfortunately, the 11 year old died on route to the hospital.

Poison Facts

Of the calls to the New York State Poison Centers:

- 50% of exposures are to children under 6.
- 25% of calls are information only, preventing poisonings before they happen.
- 64% of exposures are unintentional.
- 78% are managed at home or school, thanks to our service.