

Poison Facts:

Seasonal Poisoning Hazards: Winter

Cough and cold medications

- Children's medicines often taste good, so children may drink or eat large amounts of them. Keep medicines out of the reach of children.
- Many cough and cold medicines contain antihistamines, decongestants or cough suppressants, which can cause either drowsiness or extreme agitation (excitement), depending on the amount ingested.
- Many contain aspirin, acetaminophen or alcohol in addition to the ingredients specifically for cough or other cold symptoms.
- Follow label directions for dosage very carefully. Medicines come in different strengths (child and adult) and forms (chewable tablets, pills and liquids).
- Do not exceed the recommended dosage without contacting your doctor. If your child's age is not listed on the label, follow your doctor's advice.

Antibiotics

- Never use antibiotics prescribed for one person to treat a different person.
- Take all doses of antibiotics until they are gone. If you have to stop taking the medication, discard the remainder. Don't save it for the next time you are sick.
- Many antibiotics must be stored in the refrigerator. But be aware that the refrigerator is easily accessible to children.

Vitamins

- Never refer to vitamins as "candy." Children are especially likely to consume too many of the multicolored, flavored chewable vitamins in various animal shapes.
- Vitamins should be treated like any medicine. Keep them locked up and out of sight.
- The iron supplement in many children's and adult vitamins can be dangerous if taken in excess. If your child does not need iron replacement, buy vitamins that don't contain iron.

Mercury thermometers

- Sometimes a thermometer can break in a child's mouth. Remove any visible glass or mercury, and inspect for cuts in the mouth.
- Mercury in thermometers is not a form that can be absorbed in healthy children, so the risk of poisoning is low. It should pass in the stool several days later.
- Give the child a glass of water or milk, and **call the Poison Control Center.**

Plants

- Mistletoe, Christmas berry, Christmas rose, holly, bayberry, poinsettia and Jerusalem cherry are commonly used holiday decorations that are potentially poisonous. Keep them out of the reach of children.
- Symptoms for plant poisoning may include rashes, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Some plants can cause much more serious effects.
- If a child ingests a plant, **call the Poison Control Center.**

Holiday decorations

- Bubble lights containing methylene chloride can be poisonous if a child drinks the fluid (even if labeled non-toxic).
- Snow sprays may be harmful if the aerosol propellants are used improperly.
- Christmas tree needles can cause painful cuts in the mouth and throat when swallowed.
- Angel hair (made from finely spun glass) and ornament hangers may cause cuts or irritation.
- Tree ornaments, icicles and tinsel may block the airway or cause choking.

Alcohol

- During the holiday season, children are at increased risk for alcohol poisoning. Children imitate adults, so they may drink the beverages they see grownups drinking at holiday parties.
- Take care to remove all empty and partially empty cups as soon as possible.
- Store alcohol in a locked cabinet out of the reach and sight of children.
- Children become “drunk” much more quickly than adults do, so even very small amounts of alcohol can be dangerous to children.
- Symptoms that resemble drunkenness may include difficulty breathing, extreme drowsiness, difficulty walking, nausea and vomiting.
- Seizures may occur in some cases. Results may be life threatening, including hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and depressed breathing.
- Other potential sources of alcohol poisoning include mouthwash, cologne, perfume, after-shave lotion, rubbing alcohol and cough/cold medications.

For more poison prevention and first aid information, call the

Poison Control Center
Serving the Residents of Kansas

Toll-free Hotline
1-800-222-1222

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