

'Back-to-School' Lessons in Poison Safety



Parents, beware: the start of the school year means a shift in morning routines for your entire household. Changes in schedules and the added chaos of getting kids to school on time create opportunities for poison mistakes. Take steps to avoid these all-too-common accidents:

Medicine Mix-up:

Someone might take or give the wrong medicine—or the wrong amount—if they are not paying attention. Here are some examples of real calls to the Blue Ridge Poison Center:

- A mother placed her daily high blood pressure pill next to her glass of juice at the breakfast table. She turned her back for just a second, and her 2 year old daughter picked up and swallowed the pill.
- A father reaches for his bottle of vitamins, becomes distracted, and swallows the dog's heartworm medicine by mistake.
- A school nurse receives a frantic call from a mother who has suddenly realized that she and her husband each gave their son his prescription ADHD medicine tablet before dropping him off at school that morning, resulting in a double dose.

Prevent medicine mix-ups! When a child needs medicine, try keeping a schedule or checklist in a visible place, like on the refrigerator, where adults can mark when they have administered the correct dose. Keep medicine belonging to each member of the household in different places, and always read the label before you give or take any medicine. It only takes a second to check the "Four R's"

- ⇒ *Right product?*
- ⇒ *Right person?*
- ⇒ *Right amount?*
- ⇒ *Right time?*



Is your family's morning routine this calm? Probably not!

Children Act Fast...So Do Poisons:

Little ones will put everything they find into their mouth. They like to imitate older siblings and adults. When they see you take medicine, put on cologne, or use a cleaning product, they want to handle those products too.

Protect children from harmful substances. Medicines, toiletries, and household products should be kept up high at all times, out of the sight and reach of children. If possible, take your medicine where children can't watch. Wait until you are ready to swallow your medicine before removing a pill from its container; don't leave it sitting on a counter or table. If you accidentally drop a pill, stop everything until you find it.

What if the liquid in that glass wasn't juice?



One of the most dangerous things people do is transfer a product out of its original container into something else: a drinking cup or an empty soda bottle, for example. Somebody else may swallow the contents. Many harmful products closely resemble things that are good to eat or drink. Here are some common look-alike examples:

- windshield wiper fluid looks like blue sports drink
- bleach looks like water
- some cleaning products resemble fruit juice

Prevent look-alike mistakes. Keep all products in their original, labeled containers. Store food in one place, and everything else in another.

Poisoning is preventable. However, in spite of our best efforts, accidents do happen. If you think someone may have been poisoned, call the Blue Ridge Poison Center right away at 1-800-222-1222. Don't wait for symptoms to develop. Health experts are standing by 24-hours a day, every single day, to tell you what to do. Most of the time, a trip to the doctor can be avoided by following the poison center's instructions. Calls are FREE and confidential.

Would you like a free sticker or magnet with the Poison Center's toll free number, so that you can find it quickly in an emergency? Call 1-800-222-1222 or order online:

www.brpc.virginia.edu. And in case you are not at home when you need to call, be sure to program the number into your cell phone. It works everywhere in the U.S.