



## Education

### Poisoning

#### When should I call the Poison Center or my health care provider?

Call **IMMEDIATELY** any time you think your child has swallowed a poison.

Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What was swallowed?
- How much was swallowed?
- When was it swallowed?
- Does your child have any symptoms?

#### What if acids, alkalis, or petroleum products are swallowed?

Acidic and alkaline substances and petroleum products include toilet bowl cleaners, oven cleaners, drain cleaners, lye, automatic dishwasher detergent, and Clinitest tablets. They also include ammonia, bleaches, kerosene, gasoline, benzene, furniture polish, and lighter fluid. If your child vomits after swallowing these, more damage to the esophagus or lungs can occur.

- **First Aid** Do not try to make your child throw up. Give your child 2 or 3 ounces of water (or milk) to drink to wash out the esophagus. Do not give your child too much fluid or it could cause your child to vomit. Keep your child sitting or standing to protect the esophagus. Do not let him lie down. Go to the nearest emergency room. Bring the container the poison was in with you.

#### What if drugs, chemicals, or plants are swallowed?

Most prescription medicines are a problem if taken as an overdose. Chemicals and many plants are also poisonous. The most dangerous drugs (in overdoses) are barbiturates, clonidine, digitalis products, narcotics, Lomotil, Darvon, Tofranil, and other tricyclic antidepressants. Some dangerous nonprescription medicines are iron and aspirin.

- **First Aid** The National Poison Center hotline number is 1-800-222-1222. This number will automatically connect you with your local poison center. Do not make your child throw up. Syrup of ipecac is no longer used for poisonings. If you have any ipecac in your home, get rid of it by flushing it down the toilet.

#### What are some harmless substances?

Fortunately, many children will swallow nonedible substances that do not cause any serious problems. In these cases it is not necessary to try to get your child to throw up.

Some examples of nontoxic substances are:

- candles
-

- chalk, crayons, ballpoint pens, felt tip pens, or pencils (the "lead" is actually graphite)
- hair sprays, hand lotions, or perfumes
- dog/cat food or cat litter
- deodorants, detergents, toothpaste, or hand soaps
- dirt
- greases and oils
- silica granules
- petroleum jelly, shampoos, shaving cream, or suntan lotions.

Call your health care provider to make sure that what your child swallowed is harmless.

Pediatric Advisor 2006.4; Copyright © 2006 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All Rights Reserved. Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books. This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.