

Are There Poisons In Your Home? **July 4, 2003**

Accidental poisonings in children under 5 years of age are a common preventable problem. Toddlers ages 1 to 3 are especially at risk of poisonings because they are always exploring and putting things in their mouths. Parental knowledge of this issue combined with simple preventive measures can help decrease the risk of serious illness or death due to poisons in the home.

Types of Household Poison: Many household products can be poisonous if swallowed, if in contact with the skin or eyes, or if inhaled. Here are six categories to be aware of: **1. Medicine:** Prescription and Over-the-counter: cardiac medicine, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, antidepressants, iron pills and vitamins, cold and cough medications, acetaminophen, aspirin, **2. Home care products:** detergents, furniture polish, drain cleaners, ammonia, lye, paint, paint thinners, turpentine, hair dyes, home perm kits; **3. Poisons:** rat poison, insect and bug sprays, **4. Plants:** mistletoe, holly berries, poinsettia, **5. Lead:** old toys painted with lead paint, improperly glazed pottery, water from very old lead pipes, **and 6. Alcohol:** rubbing or drinking.

11 Important Safety Rules:

It only takes a few moments for a child to grab and swallow something that could be poisonous. Here's how to reduce the risk of poisoning and keep your children safe:

- 1.** Keep harmful products out of your child's view and reach.
- 2.** Never leave products under the sink where children can crawl to get them.
- 3.** Never leave products out on a counter where a child can climb and reach them.
- 4.** Lock up all potentially dangerous products--preferably in a high cabinet.
- 5.** Always buy medicine and household products in childproof packaging when available. And remember to always replace the childproof lids right after use.
- 6.** Always keep products in their original containers or bottles. Storing cleaning products in juice or soda bottles makes it even more enticing to a toddler who may think it is their favorite drink. It also makes it difficult to know what chemicals were ingested in the event of poisonings, which can cause delays in treatment.
- 7.** Do not call medicine "candy." Doing so may encourage a child to sneak some while no one is looking.
- 8.** Discard all old and unused medications.
- 9.** Keep the phone numbers of the Sigonella emergency room (624-3844 or 095-56-3844) and the national Poison Control Center hotline (US number 1-800-222-1222) (on base 99-001-880-222-1222 or off base 001-880-222-1222 and the number **is charged to your phone** by the phone) for easy access in case of emergency.
- 10.** Keep a bottle of syrup of ipecac (which induces vomiting) in your home, but **do not** use it until you consult with a physician or poison center. Some poisons can cause more harm if vomiting is induced.

11. Educate your children's caretakers about prevention and procedures in case of an accidental poisoning.

4 Steps To Take In Case of Possible Poisoning: If you find your child with an open container and fear that he or she ingested something poisonous, here is what to do:

1. Remain calm. **2.** Immediately call the Sigonella emergency room (624-3844 or 095-56-3844) or the national Poison Control Center hotline at US 1-800-222-1222 (for on base dial 99-001-880-222-1222 or off base 001-880-222-1222) and the number **is** charged to your phone **3.** Be prepared to give all the facts-i.e. your child's weight, the exact name of the product, approximate quantity ingested, and the time the accident occurred. **4.** Follow the exact advice from the Poison Control Center, and give your child syrup of ipecac only if instructed to do so. For certain poisons it may be necessary to call 911 (on base) (off base call 095-86-1911) or go directly to an Emergency Room. Remember to **always** bring the container of whatever was ingested with you.