



Parent and Caregiver Tips to Prevent Child Poisoning

Children are always exploring their environment and, as they grow, they become curious about what's around them. While exploration is a typical part of childhood, it's important to ensure your child has a safe environment to do so, where potential poisons are **locked up, out of sight and out of reach**.

This tip sheet includes information on the causes of unintentional poisonings, how to prevent unintentional poisonings and what to do if a poisoning occurs.

Know the causes of unintentional poisoning in kids

- Medications (both prescription and non-prescription, such as cold and pain medicines)
- Cannabis products (such as edibles or tinctures)
- Cigarettes, nicotine and vape liquid
- Alcohol
- Vitamins
- Household cleaners
- Laundry detergent and bleach
- Personal care products (e.g. mouthwash, nail polish, shampoo, creams)
- Car supplies (e.g. antifreeze, windshield washer fluid)
- Pesticides
- Certain plants



Know how to prevent unintentional poisoning

- All potential poisons, including cannabis products, should be locked up high, out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Use child-resistant caps for added security. In addition to storing poisonous items in a locked cabinet, drawer or closet, purchase containers with child-resistant caps whenever possible.
- Don't rely on child-resistant packaging alone – child-resistant doesn't mean childproof. A determined child may find a way to open even the most secure container. Use medicine containers with small doses to reduce the potential danger to your child if they get it open.
- Always keep products in their original containers. Avoid using a product if the container doesn't have a label or the label isn't legible. The original, labelled container makes it clear what's inside and, for medication, has the dosage information you may need.
- Avoid using cannabis products and other potentially harmful substances in front of children. Studies suggest children often imitate parent and caregiver behaviour.
- Replace lids and return products to their original storage place after use. Never leave medication or other potential poisons out in the open or unattended, even just for a minute.
- Check for old or unused medications and remove them from your home. To get rid of medications safely, take them to your local pharmacy.



- Never refer to medication or vitamins as candy. Getting your child to take their medication by making them think it's candy can be dangerous, as most children will seek out candy. Call it by its proper name.
- Be careful of purses and bags. Keep purses, overnight bags and suitcases out of your child's reach, as these may contain medication, cosmetics or other products that could harm your child. Remember to keep this in mind when you have visitors.
- Unpack medication from grocery bags first. A bottle of coated pills can look like candy to a young child. Remove medications from grocery bags and store them safely.
- Cannabis edibles can often resemble common snacks, such as cookies, brownies and gummy candies. Remember to follow the same safe storage practices with your cannabis products as you do for medications and poisonous items.



Know what to do in case poisoning occurs

- Contact your local poison centre immediately.
- If your child loses consciousness or is having trouble breathing, call 911.
- Save your local poison centre's phone number in an easy-to-access location, such as in your phone or on the fridge. Visit parachute.ca/poisoning for a list of poison centre phone numbers across Canada.



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