

Accidental Poisonings

By Suze Hargraves

We all know toddlers get into things. The fact that “toddler” and “trouble” both start with the letter “t” is surely not a coincidence. Toddlers invented the saying, “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” They are masters of invention and naturally curious. It’s that last part that usually gets them into some very big trouble. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one out of every 180 emergency department visits concerning two year olds are a result of accidental ingestion of a poison.

Sometimes it is at the hands of a caregiver that a child is accidentally poisoned. These unfortunate circumstances occur over 71,000 times a year in children under 18. According to the CDC, accidental poisonings most often stem from common medications; acetaminophen (Tylenol), opioids, benzodiazepines, cough and cold remedies and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (common are aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen) and antidepressants. Keeping these and all medications safely stored is imperative.

Let’s see how you do in this home medication safety quiz:

1. Are there medications in your purse, pocket or briefcase?
2. Do you keep medications in a nightstand or other low drawer in your home?
3. Is a stool easily accessible in your home to reach high cabinets?
4. Do you have non-childproof caps or improperly closed childproof caps on medications?
5. Do you have candy in the house that looks like pills?

If you answered yes to any of these questions and there is a child in or visiting your home you’ve got disastrous potential on your hands. Do not keep medication in purses, suitcases or other travel bags unless you intend to lock or otherwise secure those bags. If you must use non-childproof caps, keep the medications in a locked location when there are children around. Never give children candy that looks like pills. The confusion is just too easy. Always remember that nothing is, in reality, ultimately “childproof”. If you’re a parent you already know that. Stay on your toes.

When it comes to administering medication to a child you must read each and every label carefully. If the medication gives a minimum age limit for dosing, don’t assume just because you’ve got a “big” two-year-old they can take it. The outside of child doesn’t give an accurate picture of the development of the internal workings. Tiny livers, hearts and lungs can be permanently damaged by adult medications even when they are administered in minuscule doses. If there is any question whatsoever call a pharmacist. They will happily answer any questions regarding medications even if they are not your personal pharmacist. Don’t guess and don’t play medical provider.

Last but not least, the poison help line national toll free number is 1-800-222-1222. Post it in the kitchen, bathroom and by the every phone. Program it into your cell phone. For more information on poison-proofing your home visit <http://www.aapcc.org/DNN/> . They have child, teen and adult tips on preventing poisonings that you can post in your own home and share with other caretakers of your children.

The children in your life are precious. Don’t take chances.

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