

CORONAVIRUS-19 RELATED POISONINGS

Poison Prevention Strategies for Children, Parents and Older Adults

The Tennessee Poison Center (TPC) continues to operate 24/7/365 during the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been an increase in calls to the Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) due to COVID-19 related poison emergency and information calls involving hand sanitizer, bleach, and all-purpose cleaners.

TIME AT HOME

As schools modify schedules and families are advised to “stay-at-home”, more time is spent cleaning and disinfecting the home to protect loved ones from COVID-19. This has led to an increase of accidental poisonings in children and safe handling concerns from adults nationwide.

- Never disinfect fruits, vegetables, or other foods with bleach — it is extremely dangerous.
- Never aerosolize chemicals on the stove, ingest, or inject disinfectants.
- Put a Poison Help hotline sticker on potentially toxic substances.
- Improper use and exposure to sanitizers and disinfectants can lead to throat or mouth irritation, and vomiting.

Over **93%** of poisonings occur in the home.

49% of children age 5 years and under account for poison emergencies.

Poisonings can be prevented!

If an accidental ingestion occurs, **never** induce vomiting. Call Poison Control right away.

MYTH:

It is safe to mix chemicals.

FACT:

Never mix chemicals. It can create a highly toxic gas that can lead to severe irritation of the skin and eyes, difficulty breathing, and even death.

MYTH:

There is a cure for COVID-19.

FACT:

According to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), currently, there are no medicines or chemicals that are approved to cure COVID-19.

Therefore, improper use of cleaners, sanitizers or disinfectants to prevent COVID-19 can be life-threatening.

If you suspect someone has been exposed, call the toll-free *Poison Help* hotline first (1-800-222-1222). If the person is unresponsive, having seizures or trouble breathing, call 911 immediately.



PREVENT A POISONING DURING COVID-19

Washing hands with soap (bar soap, liquid soap) and water, for a minimum of 20 seconds, is an effective way to protect against COVID-19. The use of hand sanitizers is an alternative if hands are not visibly dirty. However, hand sanitizers across the U.S. have been contaminated with methanol-windshield washer fluid.

It is important to check the FDA's "**do not buy list**" and seek medical attention or call Poison Control if any symptoms including nausea, vomiting, or blurred vision occurs. If a product on the FDA's list has been used, it is important to call Poison Control for advice.

Children are fast, curious and learn from watching others. Natural curiosity increases their chances of exposure to hazardous chemicals, like medicines, hand sanitizers and bleach. These scenarios include:

- Licking surfaces, and placing hands or objects in their mouth.
- Breathing in toxic vapors or fumes.
- Rubbing eyes after touching surfaces that have been sanitized or disinfected.



Hand sanitizers contain over 60% ethyl alcohol, a stronger alcohol concentration than beer, wine and most hard liquors (5-40%).



- Lock items up and away, out of view and reach of children.
- Never allow a child to handle chemicals while helping to clean.
- Hand sanitizers must be used with caution, especially around children.
- Teach the child to "Stop, Ask First" before eating or drinking anything. It will help prevent a poisoning, but nothing substitutes adult supervision.

OLDER ADULTS AND MEDICATION SAFETY



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older adults are twice as likely as others to visit the emergency department for problems with their medicines, and nearly seven times more likely to be hospitalized after an emergency visit.

47%

of therapeutic error (wrong dose) cases managed by the TPC involved older adults (65+) from January 2020 – June 2020.

- Never take a larger/more frequent dose, even if a dose was missed, unless specifically directed by a physician.
- Ask for large print label and a bigger medicine bottle if experiencing vision or reading difficulties.
- Turn on a light, and use a magnifier/wear glasses when taking medicines, vitamins, or supplements.
- Use a pill organizer or a reminder system (checklist, cell phone).

Dispose of old, unused, expired medications safely or at a local drug take-back site.

Talk with your doctor or call the Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) before trying a new medicine, vitamin, supplement or changing the dose/amount.

