

Poison Prevention

National Poison Prevention Week: March 20-26, 2011

SPECIAL FOCUS:

Children ages 0-4 years

Tips for Parents:

- Store all medicine and other possible poisons out of the reach of children.
- Make sure all medicine is stored in a LOCKED cabinet.
- It only takes a small amount of medicine to hurt or kill a child.
- Never take medicine out of the child-resistant packaging.
- Always follow the instructions written on the package/bottle to ensure you use the proper dosage.
- Never refer to medicine as candy.



Carbon Monoxide:

- It is very important to protect your home from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- CO has no colour or smell.
- CO detectors should be installed at all levels of the home.
- Target areas where you sleep and places near heating or cooking appliances that use gas.
- As soon as the alarm sounds, immediately evacuate the house and do not re-enter until it is cleared by the fire department.

Injuries and Deaths due to Poisoning:

- In British Columbia, poisoning is one of the leading causes of injury among children ages 0-4 years.
- Between 2001 and 2008, there were 774 hospitalizations due to poison-related injury in British Columbia among children 0-4 years of age.
- Of these, 83% were among ages 1-4 years.
- Over half of the poison-related injuries were among males.
- 61.8% of poison-related injuries, in ages 0-4 years were from unspecified medications and 19.2% were from unspecified chemicals and noxious substances.

Information on Best Practices:

- Child-resistant packaging decreases the chance of poisonings.
- There is little evidence on whether physician/pharmacy-based education and bittering agents reduce the likelihood of poisoning.
- Colourful warning labels may attract children and increase the risk of unintentional poisoning.

Resources:

In Case of Emergency:

- If you suspect someone has been poisoned by a medicine, chemical or other substance, call your local Poison Control Centre. In BC the number is **604-682-5050** or **1-800-567-8911**.
- If someone is unconscious or having a seizure, difficulty breathing or chest pain, call **9-1-1**.

For Information on Prevention:

- BC Drug and Poison Information Centre: www.dpic.org
- Canadian Association of Poison Control Centres: www.capcc.org
- SafeKids Canada: <http://www.safekidscanada.ca/>
- Home Safety Council: http://homesafetycouncil.org/AboutUs/ExpertNetwork/pdfs/en_hslppoison_p004.pdf

Data Sources:

- Discharge Abstract Database (DAD), BCIRPU Online Data tool, 2009.
- Han, G., Turcotte, K., Jivani, K., Babul-Wellar, S., Pike, I. (2009). *Poisonings in British Columbia 2000-2005. A report prepared by the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, Vancouver, BC.*