



Poisoning

Every year hundreds of children need medical care for poisoning from products commonly found around the home.

From July 2012 to June 2017, 2,301 children aged between 0 and 15 years were admitted to the Perth Children's Hospital Emergency Department due to a poison-related injury¹.

Most accidental poisonings occur in children less than five years of age, with this age group accounting for almost half of all poison presentations. Children aged 1 to 3 are at the highest risk.

Over half of poisoning presentations in children are from pharmaceuticals. The most common product involved in poisoning cases is paracetamol, a common painkiller found in most households.

Why are children at risk?

Between 1 to 3 years of age, children begin to develop skills that make them more mobile, which means potentially toxic products are more easily reached.

Young children are exploring their world and will put anything they can get into their mouths. At this age, they are curious but lack judgment and are unable to read. They also like to imitate what others do, including things like taking medications.

Child poisoning can occur at any time but make sure to take extra care when these products may be more accessible. For example, a medicine may be more accessible when someone is sick or when grandparents who take medicine regularly are visiting.

Prevention of poisoning

- Be aware of where the different poisonous products are stored in your home.
- When storing poisons, use child-resistant locks on cupboards or a lockable cupboard, preferably 1.5 metres above the ground. Return all poisons immediately to their safe storage area after use.
- Store all medicines, cleaning products and other chemicals in their original containers.
- Do not store poisons near foods. Some medicines may need to be kept in the refrigerator - use a small lockable container to store these safely.
- Never refer to medicines or vitamins as "lollies" and always read the label before giving medications.
- Use products in child-resistant containers and ensure that lids are on correctly after use.

Remember child resistant does not mean child proof – many young children can still open them.

- Keep your guest's handbag out of reach of your children as they may contain products such as medication.
- Check that the plants in your garden are not poisonous. Refer to the Kidsafe WA Poisonous Plants Fact Sheet for more information.
- Always keep the Poisons Information Centre phone number **(13 11 26)** near your phone.

First aid for poisons

If your child swallows a poison, **do not try to make them vomit**. Take the child and poisons container and ring the **Poisons Information Centre** on

13 11 26

(Australia-wide, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).



What should I do if I think the poisoning was intentional?

The deliberate misuse of a substance can be a form of intentional injury or self-harm. People use self-harm to manage overwhelming feelings, manage emotional pain and feelings of distress. Often, self-harm is a coping strategy, and an individual who self-harms does not want to die. However, there is a risk of accidental death.

If you suspect someone has intentionally ingested a poison or misused medications as a form of self-harm, you can help them by:

- Encouraging the person to see their GP to talk about how they are feeling
- Ask the person if they've considered suicide. While asking this question can be confronting, it is necessary to determine if immediate help is needed
- Contact emergency services on 000 if you think the person is at risk of serious injury
- Suggest they contact an appropriate support agency

Support Services



Kids Helpline
Phone and webchat are both available 24/7
Phone: 1800 551 800
Webchat: kidshelpline.com.au



Headspace
Phone and webchat are available 9 am – 1 am AEST
Phone: 1800 650 890
Webchat: headspace.org.au



Suicide Call Back Service
Phone, webchat, and video chat operate 24/7
Phone: 1300 659 467
Webchat and video chat: www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au



Lifeline
Phone: 13 11 14 available 24/7
Text message chat: 0477 13 11 14 available 12 pm-midnight AEST
Webchat: www.lifeline.org.au 7 pm-midnight AEST

Remember you can only do your best to encourage some to seek help. You can't always stop them from self-harming, and it is not your responsibility if they do self-harm.





References:

¹Udy, C, McKenna, J, Skarin, D. Poisoning. Perth (WA): Kidsafe WA (AU); 2018 March.

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For more information **(08) 6244 4880**
Poisons Information Line **13 11 26**

Partner:



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

www.kidsafewa.com.au