

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This section addresses commonly asked poisoning-related questions. Suggested responses are provided for each question. If the suggested responses do not fulfill the needs of the person asking the question, refer them to the Oregon Poison Center's (OPC) emergency phone lines. The staff of the OPC can answer most poisoning-related questions. If you are asked a question that we have not addressed and you do not feel comfortable answering, again, refer them to the OPC emergency phone lines.

### General:

#### How much of \_\_\_\_\_ would it take to kill or hurt someone?

The OPC does not recommend answering questions of this nature. There is the potential for the information you provide to be used to intentionally harm someone. If asked a question such as this, simply say you are not able to provide this information. You may refer them to the OPC emergency phone lines if necessary.

#### How much \_\_\_\_\_ would poison my child?

There is not one answer to this question. It depends on the type of poison, the amount of poison involved, and the age, size and weight of the victim.

#### What is the most common poison?

There is not one poison that is the most common for all ages. The most common poisons for children under the age of five are:

- Cosmetics and personal care products
- Analgesics (pain relievers)
- Household cleaning products
- Foreign bodies/toys/miscellaneous
- Topical preparations

### Household Products:

#### My child likes to eat his/her toothpaste. Is this dangerous?

The active ingredient in toothpaste is fluoride. There is not enough fluoride in a tube of toothpaste to cause serious toxicity. However, ingesting large amounts of toothpaste over a prolonged period of time can result in nausea and vomiting.

#### What should I do with the mercury from a broken thermometer so no one gets poisoned?

If mercury is spilled and not cleaned up, it vaporizes. These fumes are poisonous if inhaled. Any spilled mercury should be cleaned up immediately to prevent vaporization. Call the OPC for advice on cleaning up spilled mercury.

#### Can mouthwash be dangerous?

Yes! All mouthwash contains alcohol in varying amounts. To a young child, even a small amount of alcohol can be deadly. It is possible for a child to drink a large amount of mouthwash because it tastes good. Keep all mouthwash and other hygiene products out of the sight and reach of children in a LOCKED cabinet.

#### When buying an insect repellent for children, how much DEET is harmful?

DEET is one of the most common ingredients in insect repellents. DEET is absorbed through the skin. In high concentrations, DEET can have harmful side effects. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

recommends that repellents should contain no more than 30% DEET when used on children. Insect repellents are not recommended for children younger than 2 months. Always read the label before using any repellent.

### **Medicines:**

#### **I found some pills in an unlabeled bottle. How do I find out what they are?**

Take the pills to your pharmacist. He/she can identify them for you. If the pharmacist cannot identify the pills, he/she can call the OPC. The OPC will only identify pills for pharmacists and physicians.

#### **Is it dangerous to take expired medicine?**

Yes! Medicine changes over time, leaving it in a toxic or ineffective form. The expiration date is provided for your protection. Never take expired medicine.

#### **If my medicine has expired, what is the proper way to dispose of it?**

These are the Federal guidelines for the proper disposal of prescription drugs:

- Take leftover, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs out of their original containers.
- Mix the prescription drugs with an unwanted substance, like used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in waterproof, plain containers, such as empty cans or sealable bags. Further conceal that container by placing it in another container such as a brown paper bag.
- Throw these containers in the trash.
- Flush prescription drugs down the toilet only if the patient information that comes with the drugs instructs it is safe to do so.
- Return leftover, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs to pharmaceutical take-back locations that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for safe disposal. You can also check with your pharmacy.

### **Plants:**

#### **Are Poinsettias really deadly?**

Poinsettias are not fatal, as commonly thought. If ingested, poinsettias can cause stomach upset and mouth irritation. All plants should be kept out of the reach of children and pets.

### **Animal Bites and Rabies:**

#### **How is rabies spread?**

Rabies can be spread from animal to animal, or animal to human. Rabies is spread when the saliva or brain tissue of an infected (rabid) animal gets in the mouth, the eyes, or an open cut. Rabies is most often spread to animals and humans through a bite from an infected animal.

#### **Can squirrels get rabies?**

Rabies is carried mainly by wild animals like raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. Humans, dogs, and cats can also get rabies. Squirrels, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, chipmunks, rats, mice, and rabbits usually do not get rabies.

#### **What does a rabid animal look like?**

Rabid animals may act tame. They may also display strange or unusual behavior. They may act aggressive, avoid food and water, foam at the mouth, or have trouble moving. Stay away from any strange animals, especially wildlife. Report any unusual acting animal to your County Animal Control office.

## **Emergency Response:**

### **What should I do if my child swallows \_\_\_\_\_?**

Call the Poison Center immediately. Because every poisoning is different, the treatment advice will differ depending on the type and amount of poison involved, and the age, size, weight and medical history of the victim.

### **What is activated charcoal?**

Activated charcoal is a gritty, unflavored substance that binds to certain poisons to minimize absorption of the poison. The poison is then eliminated through bowel movements. Activated charcoal is used in hospitals. **The OPC does NOT recommend using activated charcoal in the home.**

### **What does a poisoned person look like?**

A poisoned victim may or may not look, act or feel sick. If you suspect a poisoning has occurred, call the OPC immediately. Do not wait for symptoms.

## **Syrup of Ipecac:**

### **What is Syrup of Ipecac?**

Syrup of Ipecac is a plant extract that is used to make a person vomit. In 2003, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued its new guideline on Syrup of Ipecac. The GPC is in agreement with the AAP guideline and recommends that **Syrup of Ipecac should no longer be used as a home treatment for poisonings.**

## **Oregon Poison Center:**

### **Is there more than one Poison Center in Oregon?**

No. The OPC, located in Portland, is the official poison center of the state. The OPC is certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC).

### **What number do I call if I have a poison emergency?**

From anywhere in the country, you can call the national toll-free poison emergency hotline, 1-800-222-1222. The hotline works on the same principal as 911. It will automatically and immediately identify the caller's location and connect the caller to the closest poison center. The OPC also has a teletype for the deaf and hearing impaired, 404-616-9237.

***Note: Calling the national 800 number from a cell phone might not give you the OPC, but will connect you to a poison center in another state.***

### **Who answers the phone at the poison center?**

At the OPC and other poison centers across the country, phones are answered by specially trained experts - nurses, pharmacists, and doctors. They answer the phones 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days per year.

### **Can I call the Oregon Poison Center if I just have a question, not a poison emergency?**

Yes! The OPC can answer most poison related questions.

## **Poisoning Prevention:**

### **Where can I buy safety locks?**

Any store specializing in items for infants or children should carry safety locks. In addition, some grocery stores and pharmacies carry safety locks.



### **What is the law regarding child resistant containers or CRC's?**

In 1970, Congress enacted the Poison Prevention Packaging Act (PPPA) (15 U.S.C. §§ 1471-1476) to protect children from poisonings resulting from the unintentional ingestion of hazardous household substances. The PPPA authorizes the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to require the use of special child-resistant packaging for various drugs and household products. Child-resistant packaging is defined by the PPPA to be packaging that is "difficult for children under the age of five to open or obtain a toxic amount within a reasonable time" but "not difficult for normal adults to use properly." Child-resistant packaging does not mean the packaging is child proof. Some children **can** open child-resistant containers.

The CPSC revised its child-resistant packaging regulations in 1996 to ensure the packaging is both child-resistant and "adult-friendly." Now child-resistant packaging is tested with children under the age of five and with adults ages 50-70. A variety of adult-friendly child-resistant packaging styles are now being used.

### **What substances are covered by the PPPA?**

As of 12/2013, the following substances are subject to regulation:

- Aspirin
- Furniture Polish
- Methyl Salicylate (liquid prep. containing more than 5% by weight)
- Controlled Drugs
- Sodium and/or Potassium Hydroxide (granules, powders, flakes)
- Turpentine
- Kindling and Illuminating Preparations (lighter fluids, torch fuel)
- Methyl Alcohol (Methanol)
- Sulfuric Acid
- Prescription Drugs
- Ethylene Glycol
- Iron-Containing Drugs
- Dietary Supplements Containing Iron
- Solvents for Paint or other Similar Surface-Coating Materials
- Acetaminophen
- Diphenhydramine
- Glue removers containing acetonitrile
- Permanent wave neutralizers (containing sodium bromate or potassium bromate)
- Ibuprofen
- Loperamide
- Mouthwash containing 3 or more grams of ethanol
- Lidocaine
- Dibucaine
- Naproxen
- Ketoprofen
- Fluoride
- Minoxidil
- Methacrylic Acid
- Over-the-counter Drug Products
- Hazardous substances containing low-viscosity hydrocarbons
- Drugs and cosmetics containing low-viscosity hydrocarbons



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**May an individual request that all of his/her prescriptions be filled in non-child-resistant packaging?**

Yes. A patient may request a pharmacist, preferably in writing, to have all of his/her medicines placed in non-child-resistant containers.