

What is Syrup of Ipecac?

Ipecac is the medicine used to remove poison from the stomach by vomiting it up. When swallowed, this plant extract irritates the stomach and causes vomiting in both adults and children.

Why do I need it?

First aid for some poisonings is to remove the substance from the stomach before it is absorbed. Ipecac syrup is safer than any other method for removing these harmful substances. Antidotes recommended on many product labels may be outdated or incorrect. Having Syrup of Ipecac in your home may save an unnecessary trip to the Emergency Department or needless delay in care. We urge that a bottle of Ipecac be kept in every home whether or not children live there. But if you have children – keep one bottle per child.

When do I use it?

ONLY when told to do so by the Washington Poison Center or your physician. Not all poisons need to be vomited – and sometimes it is more harmful to remove the poison than to leave it in the stomach. Call 1-800-222-1222 as soon as you suspect a poisoning has occurred.

How do I use it?

The dose of Ipecac is different for infants, children and adults. Our Washington Poison Center staff will give you complete instructions – including giving water, juice, soda or milk following the Ipecac. Vomiting may occur about 15-20 minutes after taking Syrup of Ipecac. Be sure to keep a bucket or container close by – especially if riding in the car.

Where can I get it?

NOTE: Syrup of Ipecac is no longer being made. If you have a bottle, we recommend you keep it. Ipecac can be purchased at your local pharmacy. Remember: an unopened bottle of Syrup of Ipecac is still safe and effective after 25 years.

Is it harmful?

Syrup of Ipecac is not harmful if used properly. Sometimes mild diarrhea will develop, but this is not serious. Sleepiness will often result due to the vomiting – not from the Ipecac itself. However, it is a drug and should, like all drugs, be kept out of the reach of small children.

I heard I should get rid of Syrup of Ipecac - why does the Washington Poison Center say keep it?

The Washington Poison Center, along with the American Association of Poison Control Centers, believes there is an advantage to being able to induce vomiting at home – and nothing is better than Ipecac. More than 85% of calls the Washington Poison Center receives can be treated safely at home – far more convenient – and less costly than going to the hospital. Syrup of Ipecac is safe – unless, like so many chemicals, it is purposefully abused.

1-800-222-1222