




STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING
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DATE July 17, 2008

TO: Licensed Child Care Providers
DEL Licensing Supervisors and Licensing Staff

FROM: Jone M. Bosworth, Director 

SUBJECT: SYRUP OF IPECAC SHORTAGE

As reported by news media and the Washington Poison Center, Syrup of Ipecac is in short supply and may be unavailable at many pharmacies. It is unknown if the shortage is short- or long-term.

This creates a problem for many licensed child care providers for two reasons:

1. Providers are required by DEL rules to keep an unexpired bottle of syrup of Ipecac – a substance used to induce vomiting – on hand in the child care facility in case a child has swallowed a potentially poisonous substance.
2. The Washington Poison Center recommends having Syrup of Ipecac on-hand as an essential part of a home and child care facility first-aid kit.

Until we determine the extent of the shortage, it would not be appropriate to change the Syrup of Ipecac requirement in rule. Yet, we must work together to make sure we can keep Washington's children safe.

For DEL licensing staff:

The Washington Poison Center has issued a statement stating that Syrup of Ipecac is effective up to thirty (30) years after the product has expired¹. Based on this, DEL will be submitting an Interpretive-Policy Statement to the Office of the Code Reviser stating that DEL licensors should not, until further notice, treat an expired bottle of Syrup of Ipecac as a rule violation.



If a provider has expired Syrup of Ipecac in the child care facility a compliance agreement does **not** need to be created. If a provider does **not** have any Syrup of Ipecac, writing a Compliance Agreement is appropriate. However, on the Compliance Agreement the Licensor must:

1. Note the apparent shortage of Syrup of Ipecac.
2. Together, with the provider, immediately contact the Washington Poison Center about recommended alternatives (Toll-free number: 1-800-222-1222).
3. Indicate on the compliance agreement that both the licensor and the provider have contacted the Washington Poison Center, and what the recommended alternatives were.
4. State a timetable for when the provider should have the alternative.

For licensed child care providers:

Thank you for your willingness to help maintain high standards of safety, and for your continued effort of ensuring Syrup of Ipecac is on hand. If you are experiencing problems finding a supply of Syrup of Ipecac, please communicate this to your licensor.

At any time, you may call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for help with both an alternative and how to administer the alternative. Follow the Poison Center's instructions before giving the child any substance – including Syrup of Ipecac - to induce the vomiting (inducing vomiting is not recommended in all situations).

DEL will continue to monitor the availability of Syrup of Ipecac and report back information when available.

Thanks again for working together for Washington's children.



155 NE 100th Street, #100
Seattle, WA 98125-8007
Phone: 206.517.2350
Fax: 206.526.8490
www.wapc.org
Emergency: 1.800.222.1222

May 13, 2009

RE: WAC 246-869-200 requires the Poison Control Center telephone number be readily available and at least one one-ounce bottle of Ipecac syrup to be in stock at all times.

Lack of Availability of Syrup of Ipecac

Syrup of Ipecac has been used for decades to provide gastrointestinal decontamination after overdose. It has been shown to be effective in causing vomiting, but never shown to be effective to improve the outcome of poisoned or overdosed patients. It has been shown to be toxic if abused chronically in patients with eating disorders. Due to the lack of demonstrated improved outcome coupled with the potential for toxicity, it has fallen from favor. The recommendation for the use of syrup of ipecac by Poison Centers has significantly declined to less than 1% of calls. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently called for the removal of Syrup of Ipecac from homes.

Specific circumstances occasionally still provide the need for gastrointestinal decontamination in the home or in remote areas. In such circumstances, Syrup of Ipecac or another method of gastrointestinal decontamination may be indicated.

Studies have shown that Syrup of Ipecac retains much of its activity long beyond the posted expiration date on the bottle. Samples have shown near complete activity more than 20 years past the expiration date.

Syrup of Ipecac has recently become very difficult to acquire. Many of the sources of the product no longer produce it. Health care agencies are searching for alternatives. Poison Centers are recommending they be contacted for analysis of the need for gastrointestinal decontamination and options for that decontamination.

The Washington Poison Center recommends the following:

- 1) Requirements for the stocking of Syrup of Ipecac by pharmacies, child care businesses, and other agencies should be eliminated.
- 2) Bottles of Syrup of Ipecac should be retained and can be used long past their expiration date.
- 3) Family, friends, care providers, and others contemplating the need to provide gastrointestinal decontamination should contact the regional Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. In most cases, such decontamination will not be indicated. Professionals at the Poison Center can provide information on the risks, benefits, and alternatives to the use of Syrup of Ipecac.

William Hurley MD
Medical Director