Preventing Poisoning During COVID-19: Safety Tips with Cleaners, Medications & More

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Washington Poison Center
Ask questions in the chat box
Questions will be addressed at the end of each section
Please stay muted
Recording will be posted on Facebook and at www.wapc.org
Where are you tuning in from?

_Type your city in the chat box!_
Overview/Agenda

1. The Washington Poison Center
2. Home walkthrough
3. Cleaners/disinfectants
4. Medication management
5. Intentional use
6. What to expect when calling
Washington Poison Center Services

Preventing & reducing harm for over 60 years

- Poison Helpline
- Statewide Services
- Public Health Education
(800) 222-1222

24/7/365 Free
Confidential 260+ Languages
Calls to the Washington Poison Center (2019)

>125,000 calls

>66,000 cases
Household "Poisons"
A poison is...

Any product or substance that can be harmful if it is used the wrong way, by the wrong person, or in the wrong amount.
Routes of exposure

- Ingestion
- Inhalation
- Ocular (Eyes)
- Dermal (Skin)
Kitchen:
- Medicines & vitamins
- Dishwasher detergent
- Oven cleaner

Cleaning supplies
- Furniture polish
- Spoiled food

Family Room:
- Alcoholic beverages
- Batteries
- Carbon monoxide

- Cigarettes
- Matches
- Plants
Type in the chat box!
Bedroom:
- Medicines & vitamins
- Cosmetics
- Jewelry cleaner
- Perfume
- Carbon monoxide

Bathroom:
- Medicines & vitamins
- Toothpaste
- Mouthwash
- Soap
- Hair products
- Lotions & creams
- Nail care products
- Tub, shower & toilet cleaners
- Rubbing alcohol
Why does COVID-19 increase risk of accidental poisoning?

- New daily routines
- Likely more products at home (cleaners, meds, substances)
- Increased access to these products
- More stress → less focus
- Rumors and misinformation

We are at home more
Calls to the Washington Poison Center are increasing

- Increase in overall calls
  - Many potential reasons why
- Spikes in substances common to COVID prevention
- WA trends parallel poison center trends across the U.S.
Cleaners & Disinfectants
The risk

- Have always been a top substance we receive calls about
- Important for preventing spread of the virus, but harmful when used incorrectly or in the wrong amount
- Increase in Poison Center calls:
  - More products at home
  - More frequent use
  - Distractions
Safe use

- Wear gloves
- Open windows and doors to ensure adequate ventilation
- Read and follow all directions and safety warnings
  - More concentrated ≠ better or more effective
Do NOT mix products
- Can produce hazardous gases

Check product ingredients
- Sodium hypochlorite = bleach
- Ammonium hydroxide = ammonia

Call the Poison Center if you’re unsure what is safe
Safe use

- Do NOT use cleaning products on food
- Wash hands
- Wash produce with water
Safe storage

- Store cleaners, household chemicals, and other potentially harmful products in their original containers.
Safe storage

- Label products with Mr. Yuk stickers or other forms of quickly identifiable labeling
- Store products up high and out of reach of young children
(800) 222-1222

24/7/365

Free

Confidential

260+ Languages
Hand sanitizer
The risk

- High alcohol content
  - Stronger than wine, beer, and most hard liquors
  - Risk of alcohol poisoning in children

- We are seeing DOUBLE the number of calls about hand sanitizer
Safe use & storage

- Supervise kids when using hand sanitizer
- Use a dime-sized amount, rub hands together until dry
- Keep bottles out of sight and out of reach when not in use

Call the Poison Center immediately if a child is exposed
Do not wait for symptoms

1-800-222-1222
Medication Management
The risk

Medication management = practicing safe & effective medication use

- New daily routines → removes memory cues
- Stress & distractions
- Potentially lost access to support
Physical tracking systems

- Medication checklists
- Calendar
- Cell phone reminder app
- Pill organizers
  - Pill boxes
  - Bubble-wrapped doses from pharmacies
Safe medication storage

- Always keep medications in containers
  - Original container or pill box
- Organize and store medications in a designated area
- Keep medications separate from those of other household members
  - Or use labeling
Use a medication list

- Include medications (Rx and over-the-counter), vitamins, supplements, other substances used
- For each substance, include:
  - Name
  - Dose
  - Purpose
  - Time of day to take it
  - Any special instructions

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication name &amp; strength</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: Simvastatin 10 mg)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I take it for</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: Cholesterol)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much I take &amp; at what time</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: 1 pill at bedtime)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do I take it?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: by mouth)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special instructions</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Examples: take with food, avoid eating grapefruit)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What it looks like</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: pink, oval, imprinted with H, 17)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start &amp; stop date</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: June 1, 2017 - present)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who prescribed it</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: Dr. Smith)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where I get it filled</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Example: Safeway 2nd fl)</td>
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Available at wapc.org
Read medication labels closely

● Follow the instructions
  o Take recommended dosage at recommended time increments

● Check ingredients in over-the-counter medications
  o Ensure you don’t double dose with any other medications
Add labeling to "look-a-like" substances

- Use markers, stickers (like Mr. Yuk!), tape, or other types of labels to distinguish “look-a-likes”
If kids are around...

- Take medication out of sight of children
- Check carpet/floors for dropped medication
- Store all medications where they cannot be seen or reached by children
Self-medicating: the risk

- There are currently NO approved medications, vaccines, supplements, vitamins, or any other substance to prevent or treat COVID-19
- Be wary of product claims. Some products could lead to:
  - Harmful or even life-threatening side effects
  - Interactions with other medications
Substance safety

- Talk to your doctor/pharmacist or call the Poison Helpline before trying a new medication, vitamin, or supplement
- Never ingest disinfectants (like bleach) or non-pharmaceutical substances that claim to prevent or treat COVID-19
- Call the Poison Helpline if you are unsure if a substance is safe

1-800-222-1222
Other intentional use

- Intentional use is always a concern for WAPC
  - 2019: 17% of cases were intentional
  - 2019: 11% of cases were suspected suicide

- Stress and isolation increases our risk of anxiety and depression

- COVID-19-related isolation and stress may increase risk of substance use, self-harm, and/or suicide
Prevention strategies

- Take breaks from the news
- Set up regular communication
- Reconnect with organizations or social connections that were an important part of your life pre-COVID-19
- Explore virtual resources:
  - Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety Toolkit
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center: Resources to Support Mental Health & Coping
for immediate help after self-harm
What to expect when calling us
When should you call us?

- If you have ANY questions or emergencies with potential poisons
  - It does NOT have to be an emergency to call WAPC
  - Call about yourself or another

- We are STILL OPEN during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Call us first to:
  - Decrease emergency room and 911 burden
  - Save money
  - Prevent further COVID-19 exposure
You will talk to a poison expert

- Specialists in Poison Information (SPI’s): expert-level nurses, pharmacists, and poison information providers
- On-call Board Certified Medical Toxicologists
Tell us what happened

- What was taken?
- How long ago did it happen?
- How much was taken?
- How is the person feeling?

It is ok if you do not know all of this!
We will tell you what to do

- Stay home – what to do, what to watch for
  - Most of the time, we can treat you at home
- Go to the emergency room
- We also receive calls from healthcare facilities
We will oftentimes call you back!

- A SPI will oftentimes call you back – just to make sure everything is alright
- You can ask more questions then or call back later with other concerns

Just checking in!
Thank You!

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