

## **SAFETY TIPS**

### **Poison Proof Your Home**

Over seventy-five percent of all poisonings occur at home and are preventable. If you look around, you will see that there are poisons in virtually every room of your house. Survey your home to identify these poisons and make sure they are appropriately stored away. A good way to conduct the survey is to go through each room in the house on your hands and knees so you can view your home from the perspective of a small child. [Click](#) here for a room by room checklist of poisons.

You can keep your family safe from poisons by following these safety tips:

### **Always Practice These Safety Tips:**

- Teach children to always ask a grown up before tasting, touching or smelling anything.
- Use safety locks on all cabinets and drawers.
- Store all medicines, chemicals and other dangerous products out of sight and out of reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Keep poisons stored in their original containers. Make sure they are clearly labeled. Never store poisons in drink or food bottles. Children can not tell the difference.
- Read the label directions on all products before using them.
- Store medicines in child-resistant bottles whenever possible. Remember that the caps are only meant to delay the child's access to the contents inside; they are not child-proof.
- Avoid taking medicine in front of children. Children often imitate grown-ups.
- Keep alcohol away from children. Even small amounts can cause problems.
- Keep purses and diaper bags out of reach.
- Know which plants around your home can be poisonous.

**Never leave a young child alone with a potential poison, not even for a minute.**

### **Medication Safety**

While all medications pose a risk of accidental poisoning if taken in the wrong amount, the wrong way or by the wrong person, some medications have the potential for being particularly harmful. These include:

**Heart and Blood Pressure Medication  
Tranquilizers and Sedatives  
Iron Pills, including Vitamins**

**Diabetes Medications  
Pain Relievers  
Cough and Cold Medicines**

Do not place or store medications within the reach of children. Medications should be stored in their original containers, with child-resistant caps and in locked cabinets. They should never be stored on the same shelf as food.

Never call medicine candy or make a game out of taking it.

Do not take or give medicine in front of children. Children mimic behavior.

Before taking any medication, read and follow the label instructions carefully. Always turn on the light when taking medicine at night.

Know what foods may interact with your medications. Grapefruit juice, for example, is known to interact with certain medications.

If you are taking two or more medications, be sure to check with your doctor and/or pharmacist to avoid unexpected drug interactions. Also discuss any herbal supplements and over-the-counter medications you may be taking.

Check with your pharmacist before splitting pills even if they are scored. Some pills may lose their long-acting effect when split.

Flushing unused or expired medications down the toilet is no longer the preferred method of disposal. Evidence shows that these drugs pollute our environment when they wind up in our water sources, but simply discarding them in the garbage can lead to the possibility that they may be accidentally ingested by children or pets.

The latest medication disposal guidelines recommend that unused, unneeded or expired prescription drugs be taken out of their original containers and mixed with an undesirable substance, such as, coffee grounds or kitty litter. The American Pharmaceutical Association recommends first crushing or dissolving the medication in water. Place the material in an impermeable, non-descript container, such as, an empty can or a sealed plastic bag and throw the container in the trash.

**Flush medications down the toilet only if the accompanying patient information specifically says that it is safe to do so.**

Keep the Poison Control Center telephone number on or near your telephones-  
**1-800-222-1222.**

One of the most common causes of poisoning among seniors is accidental medication overdose. Statistics show that while adults over 65 years of age represent only 13 percent of the total population, they consume more than 30 percent of all prescribed medications and 40 percent of all over-the-counter medications. Another study reports that the average person over 65 takes between two and seven prescription medications daily. Taking multiple medications can sometimes lead to adverse interactions.

**Some factors contributing to medication overdoses in seniors are:**

- Having trouble reading and understanding the label directions.
- Experiencing “senior moments”; forgetting about taking an earlier dose and taking another.
- Taking the incorrect dosage.
- Taking medications too close together.
- Saving costs by splitting pills.

Avoid dosage errors — use dosage containers indicating day of the week and/or time of the day; don't leave it to memory.

Request that medicine labels be printed in large type.

Up to 36 percent of poisonings in children take place in grandparents' homes; use child-resistant closures on all medication bottles.