

Protect Against Home Hazards – Store Poisonous Goods Safely

Safe Kids Columbus reminds parents that March 14-20 is National Poison Prevention Week

Columbus, GA — It is natural for children to explore their surroundings – unless they're getting under the kitchen sink or into the medicine cabinet where hazardous chemicals and adult medicines are kept. As National Poison Prevention Week (March 14-20) approaches, Safe Kids Columbus reminds parents to make sure they store hazardous materials – such as cleaning products or medication – out of their children's reach.

Each year, unintentional poisoning is the cause of death for approximately 100 children ages 14 years and under and poison control centers in the United States receive 1.2 million calls as a result of accidental poisoning of children ages 5 and under. Nearly 90 percent of these toxic exposures occur in the home, and 56 percent involve non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleansers, personal care products, plants, pesticides, art supplies, alcohol and toys.

"It doesn't take much to make a small child sick," said Christy Hubbard, coordinator of Safe Kids Columbus. "Almost half of poison exposures for children under the age of 5 are caused by medicine. Children have faster metabolisms than adults and anything they ingest will be absorbed into the bloodstream very quickly."

National Poison Prevention Week is a week nationally designated by Congress since 1961 to highlight the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. Child-resistant packaging is credited with saving hundreds of children's lives since its introduction in the 1970s. Still, there is no substitute for active supervision and childproofing. "If a product label says 'keep out of reach of children,' there's a reason," said Hubbard. "Keep it up high and in a locked cabinet."

Safe Kids Columbus reminds parents to learn the toll-free poison control center number: **1-800-222-1222**. "Keep it near every phone in your home and program it into your cell phone," said Hubbard. This number connects you to your local poison control center from anywhere in the United States.

"If a child is choking, having trouble breathing or having a seizure, call 911 instead" said Christy Hubbard. "Follow the 911 operator's instructions. Do not induce vomiting or give the child any fluid or medication unless directed."

Safe Kids Columbus offers these additional tips:

- Lock up potential poisons out of sight and reach of kids. This includes makeup, medicine, plants, cleaning products, pesticides, art supplies, and beer, wine and liquor.
- Never leave kids alone with an open container of something you wouldn't want them to ingest. A child can be poisoned in a matter of seconds.
- Don't refer to medicine or vitamins as candy and don't involve children as helpers with your medication.
- Choose medicines and products that have child-resistant caps. When you are giving medicine to your children, follow dosage directions carefully.
- Keep products in their original containers. Read labels to learn if a product is poisonous and for first aid information.
- If your home was built before 1978, test for lead-based paint and get your child tested for lead exposure. Children inhale the dust of lead-based paint and can build up enough lead in their blood to affect intelligence, growth and development.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home. Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless gas that builds up around fuel-burning appliances and cars in garages. It can make a child seriously ill in concentrations that would barely affect an adult.
- Know which plants in and around your home can be poisonous.
- Discuss these precautions with grandparents and caregivers. They may have medications that can be very dangerous to children and their homes might not be as well childproofed as yours.

For more information about poison prevention, call Safe Kids Columbus at (706) 321-6183 or visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com. Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.