



**Maryland Poison Center**  
University of Maryland School of Pharmacy  
**1-800-222-1222**

# Poison

# Prevention Press

January 2009

Volume 2 Issue 1

Poison Prevention  
Week is

March 15-21, 2009

- Post the telephone number for the poison center near your phone
- Poison proof your home (checklist is available on the MPC website)
- Share poison center information with friends and family

Magnets, phone stickers and other educational materials can be ordered from the new MPC Online Store at [www.mdpoison.com](http://www.mdpoison.com). Click on the "Online Store" link on the home page.

## Did you know that...

In 2007, cough and cold medicines were the 6<sup>th</sup> most common ingestion in children under the age of 6 years reported to poison centers nationwide.

In 2008, the Maryland Poison Center received approximately 1,400 calls concerning cough and cold medicines; over 600 of these were in children under the age of 6 years.

## Keeping Kids Safe: Proper Use of Cough and Cold Medicines

Winter is upon us. Along with the cold and snow comes runny noses and coughs. Because parents do not like to see their children uncomfortable, they reach for over-the-counter (OTC) cold medicines. Parents and caregivers of young children should remember a few important points before reaching for their favorite cold medicine.

Cough and cold medicines do not cure the illness or even shorten the length of time the child is sick. Children recover from the common cold on their own with time and rest.

In October 2007, the FDA reviewed information about serious side effects in children due to cough and cold medicines. In January 2008, it issued a nationwide Public Health Advisory recommending that cough and cold products not be used in children under the age of 2 because of the risk of serious and potentially life-threatening side effects. In October 2008, plans were announced for a voluntary re-labeling of remaining pediatric cough and cold products to advise against use in children under age 4. Because none of the products were required to be removed from store shelves, the result is that labels are more confusing than ever. Some labels advise against use in children under age 4; others warn against use in children under age 2; and others simply recommend that parents discuss the dose and use for all young children with their physician.



**Cough and cold medicines are not recommended for use in children under the age of 4.** For older children, the following guidelines should be used:

- Never use adult cold products for children. Make sure the product being used is appropriate for the age of the child it is being given to.
- Always use the measuring device that comes with the product being given. Using household spoons or measuring devices that come with other products can result in dosing errors. Read the markings on the measuring device carefully.
- Always read the label of the product closely and use products that treat only the symptoms that your child has.
- Do not use multiple products at one time. Most cough and cold medicines have more than one medicine in them and using multiple products at one time can result in over-dosing on some of the medicines.
- Always store cough and cold medicines out of sight and out of reach of young children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- If a dosing error is made, contact the Maryland Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) right away for recommendations on handling the situation.