

toxtidbits

the maryland poison center's monthly update. news. advances. information.



February 2003

Poison Prevention Week—March 16-23, 2003

Why have a "Poison Prevention Week"? Shouldn't preventing unintentional poisonings be a year-round activity? Hopefully you answered "yes" to the second question. The answer to the first question should be just as simple. Since 1961, the third full week in March has been designated Poison Prevention Week to draw attention to the fact that many childhood poisonings can be prevented.

Public awareness is a key step to prevention. Health care providers can help make the public aware of the services of the poison center. Reaching the local poison center is easier than ever with the nationwide telephone number: **1-800-222-1222**. This number will directly connect the caller to the regional poison center in their calling area. Most Maryland residents will reach the Maryland Poison Center. Prince Georges and Montgomery County callers will reach the National Capitol Poison Center in Washington D.C.

Education is another important step to prevention—and what better place to start the educational effort than the local poison center. The Maryland Poison Center has many educational materials including a new brochure that covers topics such as emergency action for a poisoning, poison-proofing the home, medicine storage, poisonous plants, bites and stings, carbon monoxide, and baby-sitter information. Also included in the brochure are a magnet, telephone stickers, and Mr. Yuk stickers. Maryland Poison Center staff are available to conduct in-services for health care providers, parents, and daycare providers.

In 2002, the Maryland Poison Center answered 34,943 human exposure calls, 75 percent of which were handled at home. 19,091 exposures involved children under the age of 6 years, with approximately 93 percent of these handled at home. 99.8 percent of poisonings in children are unintentional. These statistics certainly underscore the fact that a many childhood poisonings can be prevented.

For more information about the educational resources and materials of the Maryland Poison Center, call 410-706-2151. For education resources and materials in Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties, call 202-362-3867.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT..... 2003 marks the 50th anniversary of the first poison center?

The first poison center opened in 1953 in Chicago as a result of pediatricians realizing that many of the pediatric emergencies they were treating were poison-related. This realization led to the initial attempts to collect product ingredient information and locate treatment information in one place. Since that time, poison centers have developed into sophisticated emergency telephone and resource centers, staffed by trained health care providers and located regionally throughout the United States.



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