

Poison Prevention Press

September/October 2015

Volume 8, Issue 5

Giving Tuesday is December 1—Remember the MPC!

Did you know that specialists in poison information answer a new call every 10 seconds, 24/7? While this service is provided at no cost to callers, funding is required to provide the resources for the service. It takes just 43 cents a year per U.S. resident to fund the nation's entire poison control system—55 centers staffed 24/7 by experts tirelessly providing free services. That's less than \$2—the cost of a cup of coffee—to provide vital poison control services to a family of four. Only a fraction of funding for poison centers comes from the government, so we need your help.

On Giving Tuesday, if you or a loved one has ever called the MPC, please consider investing the price of a cup or two of coffee and do your part to sustain our services. You can donate directly to the MPC by visiting our website, www.mdpoison.com, and clicking on "Donate Now".

Did you know that...

- In 2014, the MPC managed over 1,100 calls involving an alcoholic beverage.
- In 2014, the MPC managed approximately 600 calls involving a "hidden" source of alcohol.



Follow the MPC on Facebook!

Alcohol: Is It Hiding in Your Home?

The obvious source of alcohol in the home is the liquor cabinet. Alcohol is present in many households in the form of "adult beverages". The amount of alcohol varies in each type of alcoholic beverage. Beer, wine and hard ciders contain 5-15% alcohol. Most "hard liquor" like vodka, gin, and whiskey, contain 40-50% alcohol. The effects of drinking alcohol are directly related to the concentration of alcohol and the amount consumed. Small amounts of hard liquor will produce similar effects to larger amounts of beer or wine.

Are there less obvious sources of alcohol in our homes? Yes! There can be alcohol hiding in our medicine cabinet, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Let's explore some of those hidden sources of alcohol.

Medicine: Some liquid medicines contain alcohol. The concentration is usually low. But this must be taken into account when too much medicine is taken. Some of the effects seen could be due to the alcohol and not the medicine.

Cooking extracts: Most kitchens will have vanilla extract. It might surprise you to know that pure vanilla extract contains 35-45% alcohol. This is almost as much as vodka. Lemon, orange, and mint extracts contain up to 90% alcohol.

Mouthwash, hairspray and perfume: Some mouthwashes can contain 15-30% alcohol. The concentration of alcohol in hairspray varies from brand to brand. Perfumes contain about 50% alcohol, while aftershaves range from 15-90%.

Hand sanitizers: Commonly found in homes as well as schools, hand sanitizers can contain 60-90% alcohol. Many of these products smell like food. This could lead to young children thinking they are good to eat.

As with alcoholic beverages, the effects of consuming these hidden sources of alcohol are related to the amount and the concentration. A small child licking the squirt of hand sanitizer from their hand will not have any ill effects. However, a teenager who is drinking large amounts of hand sanitizer could get drunk.

Symptoms related to ingestion of alcohol range from mild to severe.

Mild

- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness
- Difficulty

Severe

- Decreased breathing
- Coma

Young children may experience low blood sugar. These effects could last for up to 24 hours. If the blood sugar is too low, it can lead to seizures and coma.

Alcoholic beverages must be stored safely. Care should be taken when alcohol is mixed with juices or soda because young children will think it is juice for them. All other alcohol-containing products should be stored out of sight and reach of young children. Parents should not let young children have open access to hand sanitizer.

If you think someone has ingested an alcohol-containing product, call the poison center right away by dialing 1-800-222-1222. Pharmacists and nurses will do calculations based on the amount ingested and the concentration of alcohol in the product to determine what steps should be taken. Alcohol is absorbed quickly, so call right away...do not wait for symptoms.