

Poison Prevention Press

May/June 2026

Volume 19, Issue 3

Child Safety

It is important to supervise children outside and teach them how to explore the outdoors safely before allowing them to be independent.

- Teach children to stop and ask an adult before touching or tasting any wild berries, mushrooms, or other plants.
- Be familiar with and able to identify poisonous plants. Safely remove them from areas where children play outside to prevent exposures.
- Dress children in protective clothing if they are playing in wooded areas.
- Have children wash their hands after playing outside. Especially if they were playing in an area where pesticides or herbicides were used or where poisonous plants were growing.

Did you know that...

- 47% of households with children under the age of 5 stored at least one pesticide within a child's reach?
- In 2025, the MPC managed over 300 bite or sting cases?

Follow the MPC on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#)

Garden and Outdoor Safety

While gardening and spending time outside can be fun and rewarding, they can also come with hidden risks. Taking a few simple precautions can help prevent exposures and keep your outdoor space safe.

Poisonous Plants

With warm weather, you may notice new plants and flowers blooming in your area. You should know the names of plants and flowers in and around your yard. Our [common plant list](#) identifies some poisonous and non-poisonous plants. This list is not all-inclusive. If a plant is on this list, it doesn't mean it's deadly. Similarly, if a plant is not on the list, it can't be assumed to be non-poisonous. If you're unsure whether a plant is poisonous or not, our experts are available to help.

Pesticides and Herbicides

Pesticides help keep unwanted insects and bugs away, while herbicides help keep weeds away. Even if pesticide and herbicide products are labeled as "non-toxic" or "natural," they can still be harmful if used or stored incorrectly. Keep pesticides and herbicides in their original labeled containers and stored up, away, and out of sight of children and pets. If you must put these products into a different container, make sure they are properly labeled and that the directions and any warnings are included as well. Do not store pesticides or herbicides near food or beverages. Follow these tips to safely use pesticides and herbicides:

- Read the label and follow the directions before using.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, socks, shoes, gloves, and safety glasses. Remove and wash clothing when finished.
- Stay away from areas where products have been sprayed until the spray has dried or for as long as directed on the product label.

Mushrooms

Mushrooms found in your yard may look like the ones in grocery stores or on your dinner plate, but they can be toxic if ingested. Identifying toxic mushrooms is done through chemical testing. Mushroom foraging should only be done by those who are very experienced. If a toxic or unknown mushroom is ingested, call 1-800-222-1222 right away. Do not wait for symptoms to call.

Venomous and Non-Venomous Snakes

In Maryland there are two venomous species: the timber rattlesnake and the eastern copperhead. In Washington, D.C., the eastern copperhead is the only venomous snake. Aside from these, there are 25 other snake species in Maryland and D.C. that are non-venomous. Both venomous and non-venomous snakes can and will bite you. To protect yourself from a snake bite, wear protective clothing to create a physical barrier between you and the snake. When hiking, stay on the clear pathways and look twice before climbing over rocks or logs. Learn how to identify venomous snakes using the [Maryland Department of Natural Resources' snake page](#). If you get bitten by any snake wash the area with warm, soapy water, then call the Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for guidance on next steps. If bitten by a venomous snake, do not try to cut or suck the venom out of the area. Do not use a tourniquet or apply ice, as this could make symptoms worse. If bitten by a non-venomous snake, speak with a health care provider about receiving a tetanus shot.

Ticks

Ticks are most active in Maryland and Washington, D.C. between April and September and can be found on leaves and in grass. Both humans and pets are at risk of tick bites. Wearing long pants, long sleeves, and closed toe shoes can help prevent tick bites. You can also use insect repellent on clothing to help prevent bites. For your pets, be sure to speak with your veterinarian about tick prevention medicine. If symptoms develop, contact a health care provider. Bites from some ticks may result in illnesses such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever or Lyme Disease.

If you suspect that you or someone else has been exposed to a hazard in your garden or yard, call the Maryland Poison Center right away. Our poison specialists are here to help 24/7. Call 1-800-222-1222 to speak with a poison specialist.