

Wisconsin Poison Center
Poison Prevention Program
Grades 6 - 8

I Introduction

- a. Read the objectives.
- b. Explain that most poisonings occur in children <6 years of age.
 1. Many children cannot read and understand product labels.
 2. Children are curious and they learn about things by touching, tasting and smelling them.
 3. Most children think poisons smell and taste “bad”.
 4. Most children think that a poison is something that they would not recognize.

II Poison Information

- a. Define poison:
 1. A poison is something that makes you sick or hurts you if you eat, drink, touch or smell it. Poisons can damage the body’s organs and tissues.
 2. Ways that poisons get in your body:
 - Mouth or swallowing a poison, also called ingestion
 - Nose or breathing a poison, also called inhalation
 - Eyes or getting a poison in the eyes
 - Skin or getting a poison on the skin, or a bite or sting from an insect or animal
 3. Explain that poisons are everywhere in their home and outside, too! For example, poisons are found in the bathroom (shampoo, medicines), the bedroom (makeup, perfume), in the kitchen (soap, cleaning products), in the backyard (plants, berries, mushrooms), in the garage (gas, weed killers), in purses (medicines, cigarettes), and in diaper bags (medicines, diaper rash cream).
 4. Explain that poisons *may* look and smell pretty, although most children think poisons look bad and taste bad.
 - Perfumes smell good and often look pretty, but they should not be tasted, or squirted in the eyes.
 - Some medicines may taste good, but taking too much medicine can make you *very* sick.
 - Some poisons may look like things that are safe to eat. (Show a bottle of a pine cleaner and apple juice, or see other examples of poison look alike on the enclosed sheet). Emphasize that children should ask a trusted adult before they eat, drink, taste, touch or smell anything!
 5. Explain the four forms of poisons.
 - Solids- like powder, granules, pills, plants
 - Liquids-clear like water, colored like juice, some are “runny” (like mouthwash) and some are “thick” (like dish soap)
 - Sprays - aerosol, pump or trigger sprayers
 - Invisibles-smoke, carbon monoxide, fumes (like car exhaust)

- b. Discuss medication safety
1. Amount: When a doctor gives you medicine, the doctor wants you to get better. The doctor gives you the right amount of medicine. If you take that amount, you will get better. But if you take more medicine than the doctor tells you, it can make you very sick.
 2. Kind: The doctor gives the right kind of medicine to children. Taking someone else's medication or an adult medication can make you sick.
 3. ALWAYS have a trusted adult help you take medicine. Never take someone else's medication. Only take as much medicine as a trusted adult gives you.
- c. The Poison Center
1. The place to call if someone has been poisoned or someone has a question about poisons.
 2. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
 3. National number, toll free 1-800-222-1222. The number will reach the caller's nearest poison center.
 4. Here in Wisconsin the poison center is at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, but we help people of any age.
 5. Calls are confidential or "private".
- d. Mr. Yuk
1. Mean, green face on stickers (show Mr. Yuk stickers)
 - Mr. Yuk means "No" or "Poison Stay Away"
 - With an adult at home, put Mr. Yuk stickers on things around the house that could make a child sick.
 - With an adult's permission, place a Mr. Yuk sticker on or near the phone, in case of an emergency.
- e. Statistics
1. Most common substances involved in poisonings in young children
 - Personal care products/Cosmetics (shampoo, soaps)
 - Household cleaning products (dish detergents, glass cleaner, floor cleaner)
 - Over the counter pain and fever medicines (those containing acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol)
 - Multivitamins
 - Pesticides (e.g. ant killers, mouse killers, weed killers, mosquito sprays)
 2. The poison center is able to help most people **without** needing to send them to the hospital or their doctor.
- f. Poison Prevention and Safety Ideas:
1. Always lock up potential poisons and medicines up high and out of the reach of children.
 2. Place the poison center number near/on the phone.
 3. Place Mr. Yuk stickers on potential poisons around the home. Make sure to do this with a trusted adult and any children in the home. Emphasize that Mr. Yuk means "No" or "Poison Stay Away!"

4. Never call medicine “candy” and never take medicine in front of young children. Children like to imitate adults.
 5. Do not store poisons near food or in food or beverage containers.
 6. The person using any product should keep the product with them at all times, or put it away and out of the reach of children.
- g. What to do if a Poisoning is suspected?
1. Remain calm.
 2. If the person is not breathing or has lost consciousness, call 911.
 3. Call the poison center –1-800-222-1222. They will help you.

III Learning Activity Ideas

- a. Play the “100 Grand Game”
- This is a question and answer game that discusses poisons, potential poisons, routes of poisoning and first aid for poisoning. The answer key highlights the correct answer and gives the teacher notes, explaining the answers. This game can be downloaded at www.wisconsinpoison.org.
- b. Practice emergency telephone skills
1. Review when to call 911 (loss of consciousness, not breathing, seizures).
 2. Review the importance of calling 1-800-222-1222; the poison help number if someone is poisoned or they think someone has been poisoned. Students role play a poison emergency telephone call using a play phone.
 - Remind the students that the poison center will ask for the exact product name as it appears on the label, the name, age and sometimes the weight of the patient, the caller’s phone number and zip code, if the patient (person exposed) has any symptoms or medical problems.
 - Remind the students that the poison center is there to help them and they should remain calm.

IV Unintentional vs. Intentional Misuse/Abuse of Products

- a. Unintentional Use
- Accidental poisonings usually occur in preschool and early school age children because children are naturally curious and touch, smell and taste things to learn about them. Also, children imitate adults’ actions. These are *unintentional poisonings*.
- b. Intentional Abuse
- ***Abuse*** of products is more commonly seen in older school aged children, teens and adults. Abuse is defined as misuse or improperly using products or substances, usually to get “high”. This is *intentional poisoning*.
 - Common substances: alcoholic beverages, inhalants (sprays, correction fluids) marijuana”pot”, cocaine, ADHD medications, over the counter cough and cold medications.
 - People abuse products/medications because of peer pressure, boredom, trying to “escape” from problems at home or school.
 - Experimenting starts with alcohol and tobacco and can lead to more frequent use and more dangerous drugs. Tobacco and alcohol are called “Gateway drugs”: they lead to more and more dangerous drugs.

c. Inhalants Overview

1. What are they?

- Common, everyday products that contain chemicals that can produce mood altering behaviors or a “high” when inhaled.

2. Ways they are abused:

- Huffing: breathing in fumes/vapors through the mouth
- Sniffing: breathing in fumes/vapors through the nose
- Bagging: breathing in fumes/vapors through the nose or mouth after a product has been discharged into a plastic/paper bag.
- Spraying: spraying the product directly into their mouth.
- Ballooning: Huffing gases from inside a balloon.

3. Why are they dangerous?

- They are misused/abused to get “high” and can cause difficulty with coordination, poor reaction time and visual impairment. These symptoms can lead to accidents to self and others.
- Some people can “pass out”/lose consciousness from inhaling. If they vomit while passed out they can choke on their own vomit.
- Many inhaled products are flammable and can be ignited by a smoker lighting up a cigarette.
- Some chemicals in pressurized containers can cause a frostbite injury to the nose, mouth or throat when inhaled.
- Inhalant abuse can be deadly. An arrhythmia or irregular beating of the heart causes sudden sniffing death. Sudden sniffing death can happen whenever someone huffs, even the first time!

4. Some Immediate effects of abuse:

Dizziness and disorientation
Hallucinations (seeing things or hearing things that are not there)
Excitation/irritability/restlessness
Loss of coordination
Irregular heart beat
Nausea and vomiting
Sudden sniffing death

5. Some Long Term effects of abuse:

Brain damage
Permanent loss/impaired motor coordination
Loss/impaired vision
Memory loss
Slurred speech
Muscle tremor and numbness in the extremities
Reduced lung and kidney function
Destruction of liver tissue
Damage to heart muscle

V Inhalant Information Resources

a. National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC)

1-800-269-4237
e-mail at nipc@io.com
www.inhalants.org

- b. The Wisconsin Inhalant Prevention Coalition
A project of the Aaron J. Wake Foundation
PO Box 860
Sister Bay, WI 54234
1-920-854-1871
E-mail at dcinhalantprevention@dewis.com
- c. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
www.nida.nih.gov
- d. Partnership for a Drug Free America
www.drugfreeamerica.org
- e. National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)
1-800-788-2800
e-mail at information@lists.nida.nih.gov
www.health.org
*** they also have bi-lingual brochures for Asian American families. Inhalant brochures are available in Chinese (PHD848), Korean (PHD869), and Vietnamese (PHD849).
- f. Monitoring the Future
www.monitoringthefuture.org
Ongoing study of youth behaviors by the University of Michigan.
A good site to use to see trends in behaviors.
- g. National Survey on Drug Use and Health (formerly the National Household Survey)
www.samhsa.gov Click on statistics and data.

VI Evaluation

At the end of the activity each student should be able to state:

1. What a poison is
2. The four routes of poisoning
3. The appropriate action if a poisoning occurs
4. Why accidental poisonings occur in children <5 yrs of age
5. One example of each an intentional and unintentional poisoning.