



# Poisoning

This page was last reviewed on  
November 15, 2023



## Suspect a poisoning? Help is a call away.

Canada has a toll-free 24/7 number for poison centres. If you suspect a poisoning, call **1-844-POISON-X (1-844-764-7669)**.

If you are located in Nunavut, contact your local health centre [<https://gov.nu.ca/health/information/health->

centres].

If you are located in Québec, call 1-800-454-1212.

**Keep the number of your poison centre nearby or in your phone.**

Program the number into your phone's contact list or keep it in a visible location, such as on your fridge. In the event your child or someone else in your household is potentially poisoned, contact the poison information centre. If the person loses consciousness or has difficulty breathing, call 911.

Approximately 4,000 Canadians die each year due to poisoning and poisoning is the third-leading cause of unintentional injury hospitalizations for Canadian children aged 14 and under. Poison centres across Canada received more than 215,000 calls in 2020, and more than a third of cases were related to children under six.

## Medications

To prevent unintentional poisoning from medications, be sure to read all medication labels, take only the recommended dosage and be aware of any possible side effects or medication interactions. Check in with your doctor

or pharmacist if you have questions or concerns about any medications you are taking.



Medications are the leading cause of poisoning in children.

Always store medicine packages, bottles of pills or syrups locked up high, out of sight and out of reach of children.

## **Keep all medication in original child-resistant packaging.**

Young children explore their world by putting things in their mouths. Child-resistant packaging is required by law for certain medications. It reduces the chance of your child being poisoned. However, a small percentage of children are still able to open medication containers. It is best to use medicine containers that contain small doses.

The original, labelled container also makes it clear what is inside and has the dosage information you may need.

## **Never refer to medicine as candy.**

Be extra careful with medicines that may taste good to your child, such as chewable vitamins and fruit-flavoured syrups. Children learn by touching, tasting and by imitating others.

**Always read the label and check the dosage each time you give or take medicine.**

Keep products in their original containers, to help you remember the medication and the dosage.

**When visitors come to your home, make sure they keep their purses or bags out of your child's reach.**

Visitors may have potentially poisonous products with them, such as medication, vitamins, cosmetics or cannabis products. Keep their belongings out of your child's reach just as you do your own.

## **Other products that cause poisoning**

- Vitamins
- Household cleaners, such as bleach
- Laundry detergent, including single-dose packets

- Personal care products, such as mouthwash or nail polish
- Car supplies, such as antifreeze and windshield washer fluid
- Alcohol
- Cannabis, including cannabis edibles
- Illicit drugs, such as opioids
- Pesticides
- Certain plants



Many children have swallowed poisonous products because adults did not store these properly or took them out of their original containers.

## Keep all potential poisons locked up high, out of sight and out of reach

As your child grows, they become increasingly active and can more easily reach and open cabinets.

Make your home a poison-safe zone by storing all potential poisons in a high-up cabinet, drawer or cupboard that can be locked using a lock, with the key stored in a hidden location, or with a latch that can't be opened by a child.

## Prevent plant poisoning

While children benefit greatly from outdoor play and learning about how plants grow, some can be poisonous if eaten or cause irritation if touched.

- Know all plants in and around your home and garden.



- Label each plant in your home with the specific name (e.g. Devil's ivy vs. just ivy).
- Keep all houseplants, seeds and bulbs out of reach of children.
- Teach children never to put leaves, flowers, seeds, nuts or berries in their mouths without first checking with an adult.
- Never eat wild mushrooms or unfamiliar wild berries. Many poisonous mushrooms look like mushrooms that are safe to eat.

Check out more information, including a list of common poisonous plants,

[\[http://www.ontariopoisoncentre.ca/common-poisons/poisonous-plants/plants.aspx\]](http://www.ontariopoisoncentre.ca/common-poisons/poisonous-plants/plants.aspx) provided by the Ontario Poison Centre.







## RESOURCES

---

### #CHECKFORPOISONS RESOURCES




Use our household checklist to review your home for potentially poisonous substances, read our tip sheet on creating a poison-

safe environment, and amplify these messages and tips using our social media guide.





Poison storage checklist for your house	PDF/UA 	+
Poison storage checklist for your apartment	PDF/UA 	
Parent and Caregiver Tips to Prevent Child Poisoning	PDF/UA 	+
#CheckForPoisons Social Media Guide	PDF/UA 	+

## VIDEOS: HELP IS A CALL AWAY

These videos share stories about poison centre calls and were created in 2023 with funds from Health Canada and in partnership with the Canadian Association of Poison Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (CAPCCT) and Parachute.





Stephanie's advice: keep the poison centre phone number nearby	VIDEO 	+
Panicked when your child eats a mystery plant? Call the poison centre.	VIDEO 	+
"Having the poison centre to call is such a reassurance": Stephanie, a mother of three children.	VIDEO 	+



“The advice I’ve gotten has always been fantastic”: Brittany’s experience with a poison centre call	VIDEO 	+
“Be open to making that call if you’re ever unsure”: Brittany on calling a poison centre for advice.	VIDEO 	+
When medication can harm: How a poison centre helped a caller in distress	VIDEO 	+
Medication is a common cause of poisoning: How the poison centre can help	VIDEO 	+

---

## PARTNER RESOURCES

Canadian Association for Poison Centres and Clinical Toxicology	LINK 	+
Consumer products safety – Health Canada	LINK 	+
Laundry detergent packets – Health Canada	LINK 	+
Out of sight and locked up tight: Tips for Parents	PDF/UA 	+

---

## PROGRAMS

#HighAndLocked

[\[https://](#)

Poison Prevention Week

UPDATED

[\[https://](#)

[preven](#)

[week/\]](#)

## MEDIA

What do daffodils and mouthwash have in common?

LINK 

★ Popping the Bubble Wrap podcast — March 9, 2023

Parachute's Pamela Fuselli interviewed by Forum Daily on the findings of the Evidence Summary on the Prevention of Poisoning in Canada

LINK 

 The News Forum — November 13, 2020

Twice as many people in Canada now die from unintentional poisoning than from transport-related injuries

November 5, 2020

NEWS RELEASE [\[http://releas-as-many-people-in-canada-now-die-from-unintentional-poisoning-than-from-transport-related-injuries\]](#)

Canada's opioid crisis killed 13 people a day in 2018, prevention report shows

LINK 

 CBC News — November 5, 2020

---

## Poison in the home: Keeping your kids safe

[LINK](#) 

 Preconceived - Podcast — July 26, 2020

---

## Interim CEO Pamela Fuselli on improper medication storage and inadvertent child poisonings

[LINK](#) 

 Huffington Post — July 3, 2019

---

## Medicine Storage Safety And Kids: You're Probably Not Doing Enough

[LINK](#) 

 Huffington Post — February 28, 2018

---