

Is your home poison proof?

Poisoning is the second-highest cause of hospitalisation for children aged 0–4 in Victoria¹, but most parents don't believe it will happen to their children or in their home.

The difference between this perception and reality is dangerous.

Most young children who are accidentally poisoned at home come from loving families with attentive, caring parents or guardians. However, it's simply not possible to watch your children every minute of every day.

So remove the risk of poisoning young children in your home. Put poisons away. Straight away.



Did you also know?

- 1** In Victoria, at least eight children a day receive medical attention after swallowing poison.²
- 2** Many common household products are poisonous, including washing machine powder and dishwashing detergent. The five most common causes of accidental poisoning of young children are:
 - medicines (particularly paracetamol)
 - caustic substances such as dishwashing powder, oven cleaners and drain cleaners
 - petrol/turpentine/weed killers
 - bleaches
 - eucalyptus oil/essences.
- 3** Children are most likely to get hold of poisons:
 - when they are being used
 - before they have been put away
 - when they are left out to use later.
- 4** Poisoning often coincides with unexpected changes in a child's development. As they get older, children are more able and curious than many parents give them credit for.
- 5** Children aged 1–2 years are most at risk of swallowing poison. This is when they begin to move about and tend to put everything in their mouths.

A Victorian
Government
initiative



Remove the risk. Put poisons away. Straight away.

¹ Based on 1998/99–2003/04 hospital admissions data from the Accident Research Centre, Monash University.

² Victorian Poisons Information Centre Annual Report 2005

10 tips to prevent poisoning

- 1 Lock poisons away.**
Medicines, hazardous chemicals, cleaning detergents and personal cosmetics and oils are all dangerous to young children. Hardware stores have many different safe storage solutions for you.
- 2 Store poisons out of reach and out of sight.**
If you can't lock them away, put your poisons on high shelves, behind closed cupboards.
- 3 Don't underestimate your child's abilities or interests.**
Children's abilities and interests change quickly. Always use safe storage areas, and put poisons away straight after use.
- 4 Check that the child-resistant cap is working on medicine and cleaning containers.**
Child-resistant doesn't always mean child-proof.
- 5 Avoid taking medicines in front of your children.**
Children tend to imitate their parents.
- 6 Never refer to medicines as 'lollies'.**
Refer to them only by their real names.
- 7 Always keep your dishwasher door locked.**
Never place dishwashing powder into the soap container until you are ready to turn the appliance on.
- 8 Don't leave paint brushes to soak in mineral turpentine.**
Clean them immediately or keep them out of reach and out of sight until you can clean them properly.
- 9 Keep visitors' handbags out of your child's reach.**
- 10 Never transfer chemicals or cleaning products to another container, especially food or drink containers.**



Anybody's child can be poisoned at home

Amelia's mother's story

Amelia comes from a loving home. But last August she nearly died – poisoned by swallowing hay fever tablets.

Her Mum tells:

'I'd just gone outside to hang out the washing when my two and a half year old, Amelia woke unexpectedly from her nap.

Amelia was hungry, and wandered into the kitchen. She pulled a stool over to the kitchen bench and saw a brightly coloured packet of what she thought were lollies. She opened the packet, which actually contained hay fever tablets, reached inside and ate two of them.

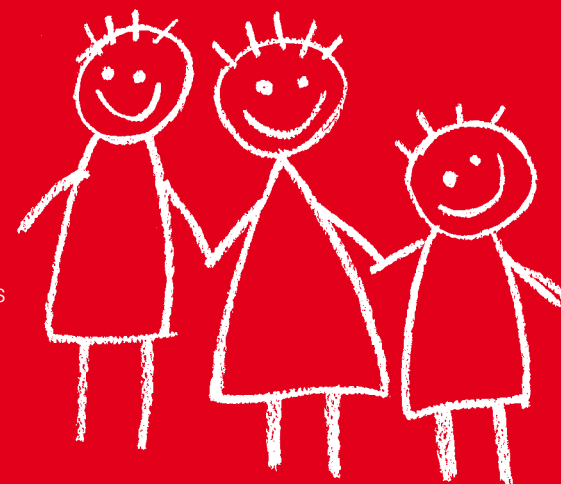
When I found her, she was drowsy and unsteady on her feet. Her eyes began rolling back and her muscles went into spasms.

I rushed her to the Royal Children's Hospital, where she was treated with drugs to stabilise her. She nearly died.

Learn from my family's experience – keep all medicines, cleaning products, cosmetics, soaps, hazardous chemicals and other poisons out of reach and out of sight of your children.

'Otherwise, they could be gone – just like that!'

**Remove the risk.
Put poisons away. Straight away'.**



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For more information visit www.health.vic.gov.au/injury.
For advice call the Victorian Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
Printed on sustainable paper.