



# Poisons



Children are active explorers and are attracted to bright, scented, items which may look like food. Unfortunately, many items that look harmless to children are actually medicines, household chemicals or cosmetics. Children, especially young ones, are at high risk of being poisoned because they learn by putting things in their mouths, and they are not always put off by a bitter or sour taste.

While young children will usually only take two to three tablets or one mouthful of a harmful substance, even small amounts can be lethal to a little toddler. A serious poisoning injury can cause

permanent brain and organ damage in a child, affecting them for the rest of their life.

It is common for caregivers to make mistakes when administering medicines to children. This can result in children receiving the wrong medicine or an incorrect dose.


 Around **1** child dies from poisoning every year.

 About **4** children are hospitalised from poisoning every week.

### TOP 10 SUBSTANCES REPORTED TO THE NATIONAL POISONS CENTRE

 1. Paracetamol	 2. Ibuprofen	 3. Silica Gel	 4. Toilet Bowl Discs	 5. Dishwashing Liquid
 6. Ant Killer	 7. Black Nightshade	 8. Glowsticks	 9. Hand Sanitiser	 10. Teething Gel

### THE CAUSES



- 67% from medicine
- 18% from chemicals
- 12% from drugs & narcotics
- 2% from alcohol
- 1% other / unknown

### WHO IS GETTING INJURED?

 <b>0-4 YEARS</b> Account for 86% of hospitalisations for poisoning.	 <b>GIRLS &amp; BOYS</b> Are likely to be injured at the same rate.	 <b>MĀORI</b> Are 1.5 times more likely to be hospitalised than other ethnicities.
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### SAFETY DEVICES



- Safety-capped medicine containers from the pharmacy.
- Cupboard locks.
- Child-resistant packaging.

### WHERE IT HAPPENS



80% of poisoning happens in the home environment.

### THE TREND




Rate of hospitalisations for home poisonings has declined 30% over the past 10 years.

### HOSPITALISATIONS 2013-2017



Age Group	Hospitalisations
0-11 mths	47
1-2 yrs	660
3-4 yrs	205
5-9 yrs	86
10-14 yrs	52

### HOW ARE CHILDREN EXPOSED?

 89% swallowing	 5.9% skin contact	 2.7% eye contact	 1.8% inhalation
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## Top Safety Tips

### Remember to be **S.A.F.E**

**STORE** all medicines, chemicals and cleaners in their original container and lock them in cupboards up high and out-of sight.

**ASK** your pharmacist for safety caps on medicines - there may be a small cost.

**FOLLOW** the dose instructions from your doctor or pharmacist when giving medicine to children.

**ENSURE** you read and follow safety instructions on medicines, chemicals and cleaners.

### Birth to 11 months

- Take care when administering any medicine to your baby. Ensure you have the correct medicine and the correct amount.
- Remember to store any creams, medicines or baby oils out of reach of infants.

### 1-2 years

- It's tempting to refer to medicines and vitamins as lollies, however this is confusing and potentially dangerous to a young child, as they may seek them out when you're not looking.

### 3-4 years

- Remember that toddlers love copying adults. Be aware they will be watching you take medicine and use cleaning products and would love to have a go themselves.
- Put your medicines together and store up high in a locked cupboard.
- Keep cleaning products up high and locked away. When using cleaning products ensure they are not left in different areas of the house.
- Keep cleaning products, chemicals and poisons in their original containers so they do not get mistaken for something else (e.g. a soft drink).
- Check your medicines and see if there are any unused or expired ones. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of those safely.

### 5-9 years

- At this age children may be starting to help around the house and property. Discuss the dangers of chemicals and medicines with children so they understand the risks.

### 10-14 years

- Pre-teens and teenagers spend more time without active adult supervision. Talk to them about the dangers of inhalants and abusing prescription medicines as well as the importance of having friends who do not use peer pressure.
- At this age children may also be handling items like petrol or oil when helping out around home. Ensure they are taught how to store and handle them safely. Continue to supervise them when they are handling poisonous items.



### What to do if a child is unintentionally poisoned

- If a child has swallowed something and you're not sure if it may have a poisonous effect, phone the National Poisons Centre on 0800 POISON (0800 764 766).
- Call 111 if the child is unconscious or has stopped breathing. Start CPR immediately and do not stop until medical help arrives and takes over.

If your child is injured you can find out more about ACC support at [www.acc.co.nz/im-injured](http://www.acc.co.nz/im-injured).

ACC Claims: 0800 101 996 or email [claims@acc.co.nz](mailto:claims@acc.co.nz).

For detailed references on the data and information contained in this card and to download additional copies visit [www.starship.org.nz/safekids/reference-cards](http://www.starship.org.nz/safekids/reference-cards).