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Feb. 9, 1967

POISONING

FIRST AID GUIDE

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POISONING FIRST AID GUIDE

BE PREPARED for poisoning emergencies. Over 600,000 cases of accidental poisoning, 90 percent of which involve children under 5 years of age, occur annually in the United States. The substances ingested include medicines, household chemicals, such as metal, furniture and cleaning polishes, cleaning and bleaching agents, fuels, paints, certain poisonous plants and pesticides, to name but a few.

Swallowing is by far the most common form of entry of the poisonous substances into the body. However, many liquids and vapors can be absorbed through the unbroken skin and many in the form of vapors, dusts or sprays can be absorbed through the lungs. Some chemicals can cause serious burns upon contact with the skin. Corrosive or caustic materials may cause serious injury, particularly to the eyes.

Familiarize yourself and your family with the hazards of chemicals used in and around the home. Learn rules for poison prevention and first aid measures useful in such emergencies.

FIRST ACTION

Call a physician immediately if poisoning is suspected. Take the victim to the emergency room of a hospital where the equipment necessary for proper treatment is available. Ask the physician to come to the victim only if it is impossible to transport the victim to the hospital emergency room. Begin proper first aid measures at once and continue until medical help is available.

IMPORTANT: Take the poison container and contents, if any remains, to the physician. If the poison is not known or if there is any question as to the poison involved, save a sample of the vomitus for laboratory test.

SWALLOWED POISON

The most urgent need in poisoning cases is to reduce or minimize the absorption of poison into the body. Evacuation of the stomach or dilution of the poison in the stomach must be accomplished as rapidly as possible.

DO NOT CAUSE VOMITING IF VICTIM:

- A. Is unconscious or in coma.
- B. Is in convulsions (having fits).

C. Has swallowed a petroleum product (gasoline, kerosene, charcoal starter or lighter fluid). Call physician immediately.

D. Has swallowed a corrosive, caustic poison (acid or alkaline poisons). Symptoms: severe pain, burning sensation in mouth and throat, vomiting. Call physician immediately. (See corrosive poison).

If none of the above conditions exist, CAUSE VICTIM TO VOMIT.

A. Give milk or water (1 to 5 years of age — 1 to 2 cups; over 5 years of age — up to 1 quart.)

B. Cause vomiting by placing finger or the blunt end of a spoon at the back of the victim's throat or by giving an emetic such as warm salt water (2 tablespoons of salt per glass of warm water) or use Syrup of Ipecac, according to label directions.

C. When retching and vomiting begin, place victim face down with head lower than hips to prevent the vomitus from entering the lungs.

D. Repeat the process A, B, and C until the vomitus is clear.

E. Give universal antidote or activated charcoal ($\frac{1}{2}$ ounce in $\frac{1}{2}$ glass of water).

F. Call a physician if this has not been done previously.

CORROSIVE POISON SWALLOWED

A. Call a physician immediately.

B. Do not make victim vomit.

C. If victim can swallow give

For acids: a cup of milk or milk of magnesia (1 tablespoon to 1 cup of water) in the following amounts: 1 to 5 year old victims — 1 to 2 cups; victims 5 years and older — up to 1 quart.

Acid and acid like corrosives commonly found around the home include toilet bowl cleaners (sodium acid sulfite) acetic acid (glacial), sulfuric acid, nitric acid, oxalic acid, hydrofluoric acid (rust removers), iodine, silver nitrate (styptic pencil).

For alkalis: milk, any fruit juice, water or diluted vinegar in the following amount: 1 to 5 year old victim — 1 to 2 cups; victims 5 years of age and older — up to 1 quart.

Alkali and alkali like corrosives commonly found around the home include medium hydroxide — lye (drain cleaners), sodium carbamate (washing soda), ammonia water, sodium hypochlorite (household bleach).

INHALED POISON (dust, fumes, spray mist)

A. Fresh air is essential. Move the victim (do not allow the victim to walk) to fresh air. If this is not possible, open all windows and doors.

B. Loosen all tight clothing and apply artificial respiration if breathing has stopped or is irregular. Continue until help arrives or until victim is breathing normally.

C. Keep victim as quiet as possible.

D. Do not give alcohol in any form.

POISON ON SKIN (or chemical burn)

A. Flush the skin immediately with large quantities of water. (Do not use water on phosphorus burns.)

B. Remove clothing from affected area.

C. Immediate and thorough removal of the poison from the skin will limit the amount of poison absorbed.

D. Following thorough washing of chemical burns, cover the burn loosely with a clean cloth.

POISON IN EYE (or chemical burn)

A. Hold eyelids open and wash eyes with a gentle stream of water for at least 5 minutes or until physician is available.

B. Immediate action is required if the injury is to be minimized.

SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

SHOCK — Symptoms of shock include cold, pale, sweaty skin, chilling and fainting or collapse.

- Victim should be kept lying down.
- Prevent chilling by wrapping in blankets.
- Do not give victim alcohol in any form.
- If breathing has stopped or is irregular, give artificial respiration.

ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION—(Give if breathing has stopped or is highly irregular.)

- Use finger to clean victim's throat of mucus, vomitus, or foreign object.

- Place victim on his back.
- Place victim's head back, stretching neck as far as possible to keep tongue out of airway.
- With victim's lips held closed, place your mouth to his nose and breathe into, with smooth steady pressure, until his chest starts to rise. (Or holding his nose closed, place your mouth on his and breathe into as above.)
- Remove mouth and allow victim's lungs to empty.
- Repeat breathing treatment — use shallow or deep breaths according to victim's size, at rate of 20 per minute. Use easy shallow puffs for infants, deeper breaths for adults. Do not stop until help arrives or normal breathing begins.

NOTE: If air exchange does not occur check to see that head is tilted back far enough. There may be an obstruction in the throat. To correct, turn victim on side and rap smartly between shoulder blades or clear throat with finger. Then resume treatment.

ANTIDOTES

Syrup of Ipecac — used to promote vomiting. Poisonous if improperly used. Use only as directed by your physician. Have labeled with clear directions.

Activated Charcoal — safe antidote which absorbs many poisons. Mix into thick soup (slurry) to give. Obtain from druggist.

Universal Antidote — safe antidote which absorbs and neutralizes several poisons. Have druggist mix for you (2 parts of activated charcoal, 1 part magnesium oxide, 1 part tannic acid). A homemade universal antidote is 4 tablespoons of crumbled burnt toast (burn black), 2 tablespoons strong tea, 2 tablespoons milk of magnesia.

Atropine tablets — for users of parathion, TEPP and other organic phosphate pesticides. Consult physician about emergency supply. Dangerous if misused. Keep away from children and keep around only during spraying season.

POISON PREVENTION

- Store labeled poisons, drugs, cleaning agents,

pesticides and other chemicals out of reach of children, preferably under lock and key.

- Don't keep drugs, pesticides and other chemical products on shelves used for storing food.
- Keep chemical compounds in their original containers. Don't transfer to jars, pop bottles and other unlabeled containers.
- Destroy or bury unwanted drugs, pesticides and other chemicals — and their containers. Don't throw them where children may get them.
- Don't mix compounds unless you know it is safe — especially bleach or the chlorinated scouring powders.
- Don't take medicine in the dark.
- Don't call medicine "candy" when giving it to children.
- Read the label before using chemical products. Follow all directions.
- Use protective clothing and respirator if label directions on pesticides advise it.
- When using pesticides, keep out of the spray or dust; and keep others out. Do not spill or splash on the skin.
- When using pesticides, wash thoroughly after the job is done and before eating or smoking.
- Poison proof your home.



"UBIE" Says: Keep this guide in your medicine chest or First Aid Kit for ready reference.

This publication was coordinated by Jack D. Price, leader-agricultural chemicals, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University, in cooperation with the Rural Health Committee of the Texas Medical Association.

First Aid measures in the publication are based upon recommendation made by the American Medical Association's Committee of Toxicology and the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Accidental Poisoning.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Texas A&M University and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.