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Summer Safety Tips from the Illinois Poison Center

(Chicago) -- The sun is shining, school is out and the pools are open. With the summer season comes cook outs, camping trips, picnics and trips to the pool or beach. When planning your next outing, The Illinois Poison Center encourages you and your family to remember these summer poison prevention safety tips:

- Sunscreen should always be applied before exposing skin to the summer sun. While sunscreen protects the skin from harmful ultraviolet radiation, it can cause illness if large amounts are ingested. Consuming a larger amount of sunscreen can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, but accidentally consuming a small amount of sunscreen will not cause any symptoms. Sunscreen products should be used as directed on the label and should be kept out of the sight and reach of children.
- As West Nile season approaches, it is important to remember to apply insect repellants before going outdoors. Insect repellants help keep the bugs away and, in small amounts, do not have harmful effects. Many repellents use an ingredient called DEET that, in certain concentrations, can be a danger. Studies have shown that it is acceptable to use concentrations of DEET of up to 30 percent for adults and children as young as two months old. Select a product with the lowest concentration effective for the amount of time planned to spend outdoors. Products with concentrations of 10 percent are effective for about two hours and products with a concentration of 24 percent are effective for about five hours. Picaridin is an alternative to DEET recommended by the US Centers for Disease Control. Picaridin is not greasy or sticky and is not as likely to irritate the skin. This repellant is available in a seven percent solution and should be applied every three to

four hours. Closely follow the directions on the label and be sure to wash your hands after using any type of insect repellent or pesticide.

- Many products are used to keep pool water clean. Two common pool chemicals are bromine and chlorine, which are usually bought in tablet or powder form. These chemicals can be dangerous if the dust from these chemicals is inhaled. The dust can also cause eye irritation, skin rashes and shortness of breath, similar to an asthma attack. When mixed with other chemicals, like cleaners, a poisonous gas is formed that may cause burning of the eyes, sore throat, severe coughing, and breathing problems. Prevent these chemicals from coming into contact with eyes and mouth and wash hands after using either product. Pool cleaning products should be stored out of the sight and reach of children.
- Lawn care products and pesticides pose poisoning dangers. Fertilizers may irritate not only skin, but the stomach as well. After applying fertilizer to a lawn or garden, stay off of the treated areas for two days or until it rains. Certain pesticides are even more toxic than lawn fertilizers. These products should not be applied on windy days and protective clothing such as gloves, protective goggles, long sleeves and pants should be worn during the application process. Directions on the label should be followed closely and carefully. Lawn chemicals must always be stored in the original container which displays a complete list of ingredients, directions for use and first-aid steps in case of accidental poisoning.

If you suspect poisoning, call The Illinois Poison Center right away at, 1-800-222-1222. Do not wait for symptoms to appear.

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The Illinois Poison Center serves all of Illinois 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Staffed by nurses, physicians, pharmacists and other poison specialists, the IPC offers free, confidential poison prevention advice and treatment recommendations via a toll-free hot line, 1-800-222-1222.

The IPC is the only certified, regional poison center in Illinois, serving more than 12 million residents in 102 counties. The IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice to the public and health care professionals on alcohol and drug misuse, medication problems, bites and stings, occupational accidents and other poisonings.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association of more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services in the Chicago area.

Editor's Note: Illinois Poison Center experts are available for media interviews. Please contact Elizabeth Leonard at 312-906-6142 or eleonard@mchc.com to schedule an interview.