



A Newsletter of the Illinois Poison Center

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■ Consumer Alert: Poison Purse - Be Wary of the Danger You Carry



It's an essential accessory for many women, carrying a purse filled with all your daily necessities such as hair spray, cosmetics and hand sanitizer. Did you know you could be carrying potentially toxic poisons? The Illinois Poison Center is warning moms, grandmothers and caregivers to be aware of the items they place into their bags and where they store them.

"For many parents there's no question about keeping dangerous chemicals or medicines out of children's reach and sight but when it comes to a purse being viewed as a potential poisonous threat that thought may never enter their minds," said Dr. Michael Wahl, Medical Director of the Illinois Poison Center.

Products commonly carried such as hand sanitizer, eye drops and prescription medication can be toxic depending on the dose, said Wahl. In 2008, the Illinois Poison Center received nearly 100,000 calls 52% of which involved children age 5 and younger.

"Children are curious by nature and love to put everything in their mouths which is why it is crucial that caregivers remove any potential poison threat from their path," says Wahl.

Safety Tips:

To help keep you and your family safe, the Illinois Poison Center compiled a list of the most common dangerous products found in purses:

Pepper spray– May irritate eyes, skin and cause breathing problems

Cigarettes – May cause severe upset stomach, vomiting and in extreme cases seizures

Hand sanitizer – Contains 60% alcohol, small amounts swallowed could result in feeling drunk or intoxication

Baby powder (with talc) – May cause eye and throat irritation, if inhaled could cause serious breathing problems

Eye drops – May become extremely drowsy and lower blood pressure

Over-the-counter/prescription drugs- Depending on the product and dose could cause heart palpitations, lower or raise blood pressure, seizures and death

Toothpaste – May cause stomach upset if swallowed

Insect repellent- May irritate eyes and mouth; possible seizures if swallowed

Batteries – May cause severe irritation or burns if chewed

Hairspray – May irritate eyes

The Illinois Poison Center wants to remind caregivers: Children act fast and so do poisons. If you suspect a poisoning or have questions for a poison expert, call the Poison Center's toll-free hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

■ Herbal Supplements: "Natural" Ingredients Could Pose Health Risks



The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) urges consumers to check with your physician before using herbal supplements. Poison experts warn that these herbal or "natural" products readily available nationwide may pose a serious health threat.

According Federal Drug Administration (FDA), the maker of dietary supplement Hydroxycut, agreed to recall 14 of its products in May of 2008 after the FDA received 23 reports of liver problems, including a death of a 19-year-old boy. Other patients experienced symptoms ranging from jaundice, or yellowing of the skin, to liver failure. One received a transplant and another was placed on a list to await a new liver. Hydroxycut is advertised as being made from natural ingredients, the FDA said. At least 9 million packages were sold last year alone.

"A major concern is that people assume that supplements labeled as all "natural" or herbal are safe but what many don't realize is that even natural ingredients can be toxic," said Erin Pallasch, Pharmacist for the Illinois Poison Center.

"Many of these so-called herbal products contain the actual prescription drug ingredients in addition to the "natural" ones," said Pallasch. "For example some herbal sexual enhancers contain, sildenafil, the active ingredient found in the prescription medication Viagra."

The bottom line is you could be taking an herbal supplement that is just as potent as a prescription drug and as a result can interact with other medications you are taking. Another potential threat is overmedicating yourself since both herbal and prescription drugs have similar ingredients.

Poison expert Erin Pallasch breaks down the dangers for some of the most popular herbal supplements:

St. John's wort - is commonly used as an herbal antidepressant; some effects include: upset stomach, fatigue and confusion. When taken in large doses or in combination with other antidepressants it may potentially lead to the development of serotonin syndrome, symptoms include: shivering, diarrhea, muscle rigidity, fever and seizures. Severe serotonin syndrome can be fatal if goes untreated.

Guarana - is an ingredient found in herbal energy boosters which contains 2.5 to 7 percent caffeine compared to 1 to 2 percent in coffee) and acts as a central nervous system stimulant, increasing heart rate and blood pressure. Severe reactions to this supplement may require treatment in an emergency room.

Ginkgo biloba - is an herb commonly used for memory enhancement. Side effects may include nausea and vomiting and has been linked to dangerous reports of bleeding including subarachnoid hemorrhage which is the result of sudden bleeding from a ruptured aneurysm.

Patients with any history of bleeding disorders or those taking anticoagulants are at a higher risk for these dangerous effects.

If you or someone you know has questions and concerns regarding the use of any herbal supplements, please call the Illinois Poison Center toll-free hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to speak with a poison specialist.

■ Seasonal Danger: Illinois Poison Expert Connie Fischbein Warns About the Poisoning Risks of Eating Wild Mushrooms



The ever changing autumn season brings more than just colorful leaves; wild mushrooms also begin popping up in neighborhoods and nearby forest preserves. While they may seem tempting you may want to think twice before eating them. Last September, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) received several mushroom poisoning cases from across the state. Some victims received hospital evaluations for potentially life threatening symptoms after eating toxic mushrooms.

Connie Fischbein, Illinois poison expert for the past 27 years, has dealt with her share of mushroom poisonings. Connie has honed her expertise in the field of mycology, the study of mushrooms, their toxicological and biochemical properties. To help better identify potentially deadly mushroom species, Connie created an email address which allows people to send digital images of fungi to professional mycologists throughout the state of Illinois. This process helps poison experts quickly identify toxic fungi, saves lives and unnecessary medical costs.

"When it comes to mushrooms, it's really hard to differentiate the good from the bad," said Connie Fischbein, Certified Specialist in Poison Information for the Illinois Poison Center. "Many fungi species look similar which makes it easier to make a mistake and in some rare cases they can be very poisonous or deadly."

Connie says unless you are an expert, your best bet is to stay away from wild mushrooms in forest preserves and your backyard. To help prevent poisonings the Illinois Poison Center created a list of potential health risks associate with the most common wild mushrooms:

Amanita - Some species in this family of mushrooms contain amatoxins, a potent liver poison that is responsible for most of the mushroom-related deaths every year. Liver damage is a result of eating these mushrooms and symptoms may not appear until many hours after they are eaten. That is why it is critical not to wait for symptoms to appear; if you suspect a poisoning, call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately.

Galerina autumnalis - Contains the potent liver poison amatoxin which can cause liver damage. This mushroom grows on wood and is commonly mistaken for the edible honey mushroom.

Chlorophyllum molybdites - Most common cause of mushroom poisonings in North America. White mushroom commonly found in grass. It may cause nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea.

Omphalotus Olearius (Jack-O-Lantern)- this species is bright orange in color and actually glows in the dark. It may cause vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. This mushroom is commonly mistaken for the edible Chanterelles.

Each individual may experience symptoms differently, and as with most poisons, symptoms experienced will depend on many factors, such as age, weight and amount consumed.

***For more information on how to properly identify a mushroom and what to do in an emergency go to www.illinoispoisoncenter.org and click on poisoning hazards**

■ Illinois Poison Center Offering Organizations Grant Funds for Assistance in Spreading the Message of Poison Prevention



The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) seeks organizations that work with community clients providing human services and education that are willing to integrate poison prevention and safety information into their current programs, services, and outreach activities.

Selected organizations will receive poison prevention education training from IPC staff to enable organization staff/representatives to easily, effectively share poison prevention information with their community. All poison prevention materials will be provided free of charge by the IPC. A grant award ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 will be awarded to each selected organization to integrate poison prevention education into their existing community education activities. Any organization selected must agree to the identified scope of work and apply the grant award stipend per the terms of the grant. It is anticipated that 10 to 20 organizations will be selected to participate in this year's project.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 30th, 2009

Awards are anticipated to be announced before the end of August. A second round of awards may be made by the end of October. Guidelines and additional information about the IPC are available on the IPC website. Application forms are also available online. For assistance, organizations can contact vdance@ilpoison.org



Michael Wahl

A MESSAGE FROM DR. MICHAEL WAHL

The Value of the Illinois Poison Center

IPC Medical Managing Director

The Illinois Poison Center's mission is clear: to reduce the incidence and injury of poisoning in our communities. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year poison experts strive to achieve that goal through expert advice and compassion.

Staffed by physicians, pharmacists, nurses and other personnel specially trained in toxicology, the Illinois Poison Center provides life saving services. In 2008, IPC poison experts handled nearly 100,000 calls regarding household chemicals, cosmetics, personal care products, herbals, medication errors, carbon monoxide, mushrooms, insect bites and more. While many calls from the general public are of a dramatic nature, 90 percent of exposures can be treated at home with simple first aid instructions from the IPC without a referral to an emergency department.

The poison center's value is seen and felt by improving patient outcomes while saving scarce medical resources through decreasing unnecessary emergency department visits, hospital admissions and the length of hospital stay for admitted patients. The IPC's combined efforts saved an estimated \$60-100 million in unnecessary health care costs this year alone.

The Illinois Poison Center has proven to be a free service that saves lives and health care resources... the question is what if the poison center didn't exist? Where would you turn? What would you do in an emergency?

The value of the Illinois Poison Center is currently up for debate by lawmakers who will decide the financial future of our services that help you and your family. Please support the Illinois Poison Center so we can continue working towards our goal of an Illinois that no longer suffers from the harm of poisoning.

WANTED: YOUR STORIES!

The Illinois Poison Center would love to hear from you. If you or someone you know has used the Illinois Poison Center's services and is willing to share their story please contact Elizabeth Chmurak, IPC Public Affairs Specialist: echmurak@ilpoison.org or (312) 906-6146.

INVESTING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Illinois Poison Center is a non-profit organization serving the state of Illinois. With your help, we can continue to keep children and families safe from poisons.

To make a contribution, please contact Gail Lise Moran, IPC Development Coordinator: gmoran@ilpoison.org or at (312) 906-6177.

DONATE!

*All donations are tax deductible

Poison Help — Anytime, Anywhere

Remember the Poison Center hotline, 1-800-222-1222, works nationally. Be sure to save the number to your cell phone before leaving home.



Illinois Poison Center
1-800-222-1222 (toll-free)
TTY/TDD 312-906-6185
www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org

IPC Public Affairs Specialist..... Elizabeth Chmurak
Development Coordinator.....Gail Lise Moran
Public Education Manager.....Vickie Dance

A Program of MCHC

The Illinois Poison Center is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, a membership and service organization dedicated to helping members care for their communities through access to health care and improved delivery of services.

