

Themed Campaign

Poisoning

Theme Focus	Poisoning
Area	ALL LOCALITIES
Timescale	April – June 2019

Introduction

Babies and children love to explore and put things in their mouths which can result in the child not only being exposed to poisoning but can also place them at risk from choking. The two main poisoning risks for children under 5 years of age are from medicines (nearly 70% of poisoning admissions) and household chemicals (over 20% of poisoning admissions). Whilst these episodes do not often result in a fatality they can often lead to very high numbers of short hospital admissions for children under 5.

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT 2019)

The scale and nature of the problem (local Northumberland data)

Between January – Sept 2018 Northumberland A&E hospital attendances recorded a total of **85** accidental poisonings (Northumberland) for children **under** 5 years of age (42 females and 43 males).

Examples of Northumberland A & E admissions as a result intake of poisonous substances included:

Medicines such as: Calpol, Paracetamol, Ibrufen, and Propranolol

Cleaning/Household Products such as: Liquitabs, White Spirit (Turpentine), Air Fresheners, Bleach, Carpet/Floor Cleaners, Alcohol Hand Gel, Fabric Softener and Shower Gel

Other items included: Olbas Oil, Nail Varnish Remover, Boric Acid Sample, Sun Cream, Wild Mushroom, Berries, Facial Toner, Toothpaste, Vapour Rub, Glitter and Battery (potential burn and choking hazard).

Outcome

The majority of primary attendances resulted in same day home discharges with 1 attendance aged 0-11mths being transferred for further specialist treatment signifying more serious damage.

Safety steps to prevent poisoning

At approx. 6 months babies may start to crawl and put objects in their mouths which put them at risk of swallowing something harmful. To stop them accessing poisonous items please use the following guidelines:

- Keep medicines locked away or stored at high level where they cannot be accessed.
- Ensure safety catches are fitted on low cupboard doors/drawers and bottle tops/lids are secured properly.
- Ensure painkillers or any tablets are not left lying around on tables, floors, benches or in handbags.
- Ensure cleaning products are removed from bathroom/kitchen floor areas/under the sink and are stored in a high cupboard.
- Keep liquid detergent capsules stored away safely as they are not only poisonous but can squirt and damage the eye area.
- Buy products that contain Bitrex which doesn't taste nice therefore children are more likely to spit the chemical out.

Toddlers like to explore and will mimic what adults/siblings do. This puts them more at risk than any other age group. Please see guidelines below to ensure safety:

- Keeping medicines and cleaning products out of reach and sight ideally in a high lockable cupboard.
- Make sure bottles/containers using 'child resistant caps' are also locked away as 3-4 year olds can open these in seconds.
- Try to take your own medication when your child isn't watching as they may mimic what you do.
- In order to avoid confusion for your child, when trying to get your child to take their own medicine do not pretend it is a sweet.
- When visiting friends/relatives or any external venues take time to look out for any medicines or any cleaning products that may be lying around.
- As even small amounts of alcohol can be dangerous to small children, ensure any glasses containing left over alcohol are cleared away.
- Be vigilant of aromatherapy oils, perfumes and cigarettes as they can also be harmful to small children.

Young children aged 3 to 5 may have some knowledge of what they can safely eat but are still at risk from accidental poisoning. This age group are also more likely to be able to open child-resistant bottle tops. For safety please use the following the guidelines:

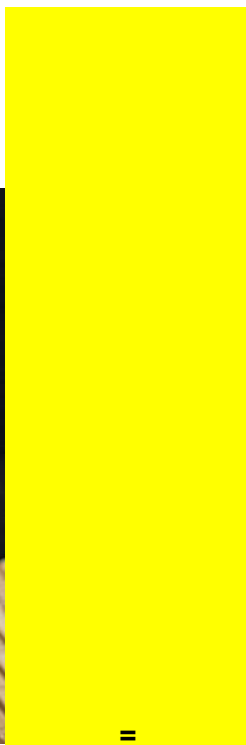
Colourful medicines/tablets that look like sweets or fruit drinks may confuse your child so keep them locked away and in their original bottles.

- Keep cleaning products, DIY or garden chemicals locked away at all times whether they are kept in the house or garden shed.
- Teach children not to eat anything they pick from outside as poisonous berries can look similar to the ones they have in puddings.

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT 2019)

Mistaken Identity

Reed diffuser air fresheners are easily mistaken for drinking straws and pop/fruit juices



Tablets are often mistaken for sweets



Symptoms associated with serious poisoning

- being sick
- abdominal pain
- drowsiness
- reduced levels of consciousness
- breathing difficulties
- seizures (fits)

First Aid for poisoning if swallowed

- get medical help immediately
- do not let the child drink anything
- do not make the child sick, this can cause more damage
- if you know what product has been taken provide a sample for medical staff

- if the child appears to be unconscious, try to wake them and encourage them to spit out any substance
- residual chemicals on the skin should be rinsed away with plenty of water

The NHS has advice at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Poisoning/Pages/treatment.aspx

Further information and suggested activities

Download the RoSPA New 2018) poster on poisoning via the following link:

<https://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/campaigns-fundraising/family-safety-week/2018/poison-tips.pdf>

Check out Toxic Tales Trailer Video by visiting the following:

<https://www.capt.org.uk/poisoning-prevention>

Encourage parents to undertake the Bitrex taste test – free Bitrex taste test kits can be ordered via the following link:

<http://www.bitrex.com/taste-test> .

Encourage parents to view the environment from a child's eye view level in order to identify potential hazards i.e. what can be seen/reached which can cause harm to the child.

Encourage parents to look at potential hazards in their handbags which can be both a poison/choking/burn hazard:



See attached 'Find the Poisons' word search game for parents to educate their children.



Find the Poison
Words.docx

Button batteries are small, round batteries that come in many different sizes and types. Lithium button batteries (often called 'coin batteries') are the most dangerous as they are larger and more powerful. They can burn a hole through the throat and can lead to catastrophic internal bleeding and death. The reaction can happen in as little as two hours.



Button batteries can be found in everyday objects such as: visual remote controls, talking/musical birthday cards, fancy dress costumes, fidget spinners with LED lights, watches, hearing aids and car key fobs.

It is therefore important to keep any device containing these batteries or used button batteries out of children's reach.

Sometimes there are no obvious symptoms that a child has swallowed a button battery but may present nausea, loss of appetite, point to their throat or tummy, complain of pain in these areas or might even vomit blood.

If you suspect that a child has swallowed a button battery it is important to take immediate action:

- Take the child straight to the A&E department at your local hospital or dial 999 for an ambulance.
- Tell the doctor that you think your child has swallowed a button battery.
- If you have the packaging or the product which housed the battery take it along to A & E, as this will help the doctor identify the type of battery and make treatment easier.
- Do not let your child eat or drink.
- Do not make them sick.
- Trust your instincts and act fast – do not wait to see if any symptoms develop.

Further information and to view a video of a parent talking about his child's death following ingestion of a button battery can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.capt.org.uk/button-batteries>