

Poison Prevention Press

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Summer Food Safety Tips

Follow these tips to help prevent food poisoning:

- Wash hands with warm soapy water before handling food
- Wash utensils, dishes and work surfaces thoroughly after working with food
- Pre-heat the grill before placing the food on it
- Use a food thermometer to make sure food is fully cooked
- Refrigerate leftovers right away

Common symptoms of food poisoning are nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. They usually develop suddenly and within 48 hours. Symptoms should go away in 24-48 hours. If they last longer, call your doctor.

Did you know that...

- In the summer of 2014, the MPC helped to manage 33 copperhead snake bites?
- In the summer of 2014, the MPC managed 414 calls about pesticides?



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Poisonings Don't Take a Summer Vacation

The phones at the Maryland Poison Center (MPC) ring all year-round. We don't have a "busy season" per se. But the types of calls that come in vary depending on the time of the year. Let's take a closer look at the calls involving substances other than medicines that came into the Maryland Poison Center in the summer of 2014.

Cosmetics and personal care products: Sunscreens are at the top of this category in summer while hand sanitizers lead this category throughout the year. You might expect this category to be the number one cause for calls to the MPC. Everyone has sunscreen, lotion, hand sanitizer, toothpaste, etc. in their home.

Household cleaning products: Bleach and single use laundry packets lead this category in the summer as well as all year. All cleaning products should be stored up and away and out of sight, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Pesticides: It is not surprising that pesticides come in third on the list. This category includes insect killers that we use inside and outside our home. In fact, 40% of the pesticide exposures reported in 2014 occurred in the summer months. This category also includes insect repellents that contain DEET or picaridin. Around 70% of insect repellent exposures reported in 2014 occurred in the summer months. It is important to read the label every time a product is used. Also, the directions should be followed exactly.

Alcoholic beverages: Special care must be taken at cookouts and summer parties with alcoholic beverages. Many look and taste like soft drinks or juice, so it is very easy for young children to get confused. Alcohol is particularly dangerous in young children because it can lower their blood sugar and cause them to pass out. It is also easier for teens to experiment with alcohol since it is more accessible at summer parties.

Foreign bodies and toys: The rate of calls about toys and foreign bodies is similar in the summer as in the rest of the year. However bubble blowing solution and glow sticks are more popular in the summer.

Hydrocarbons: This is a broad category that includes gasoline, freon, lighter fluid and lamp oil. About 80% of freon exposures reported in 2014 occurred in the summer months. Freon is a coolant used in car and home air conditioners and refrigerators. Other hydrocarbons to be aware of are lighter fluid and tiki torch oil. Never put these products in cups when using them. They can easily be mistaken for a beverage. In fact, tiki torch oil looks just like apple juice in the bottle and in a cup.

Plants: The MPC gets calls about plants throughout the year. Outdoor plants are often not identified, so when young children eat leaves and berries, the poison specialist must rely on the caller's description to assess toxicity. Try to identify the plants in and around your yard. Do not pick wild berries with young children. They are not able to tell the difference between berries that are okay to eat and berries that may be poisonous. Teach them to ask before tasting any berry in the yard or woods.

Bites and Stings: This category doesn't make the top 10 list of exposures for the year. Remember that many insects will bite or sting, causing pain, redness or swelling at the bite site. Maryland is home to only one poisonous spider: the black widow. Wash all bites with soap and water and watch for signs of infection. Always check for ticks after being outside. The most common tick-borne disease in Maryland is Lyme disease. Finally, all snakes will bite if provoked or surprised. Maryland is home to two poisonous snakes: the copperhead and the timber rattlesnake. Even bites from these snakes are easily managed with the help of the MPC.

Enjoy the summer, but be aware of these poison hazards. Know that pharmacists and nurses at the MPC are available 24/7 to help—just dial 1-800-222-1222.