



# Tempe Fire Department Safety Tip

## POISON PREVENTION

Each year thousands of people become injured or ill due to unintentional poisonings. These may occur through direct skin contact, inhalation, absorption, or ingestion of the substance into the body.

Many types of harmful substances are found throughout the home. A harmful substance is defined as any *chemical, product, or plant which can be injurious to children, adults, or pets.*

All household products must be used and stored with great care, especially when children live in the home or visit often. Household products such as cleaning liquids and powders, paint thinners, drain cleaners, windshield washer fluid and polishes are found in most homes. Because they are so common, *we forget how dangerous they are.* Most household chemical containers carry symbols and safety warnings on the labels. Learn the symbols and follow the instructions. By doing so you could prevent an injury or even save a life.

### ***Other Harmful Substances***

- Prescription and non-prescription drugs.
- Ammonia, bleach, dish soap, alcohol, spray cleaners, toothpaste.
- Garden chemicals such as herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers.
- Antifreeze, paint and paint products (kerosene, turpentine).
- Swimming pool chemicals.
- Plants such as poinsettias, oleanders, diffenbachias, azaleas, mistletoe, and pyracantha berries.



### ***Safe Guarding Your Home***

Unintentional poisonings are preventable. Safe guard your home by doing the following:

- Use safety latches on medicine cabinets, drawers, and cupboards where substances are stored.
- Use products with child resistant caps.
- All products should be stored in their original container for immediate reference to safety symbols and warnings.
- All chemicals in the garage or storage areas should be kept out of a child's reach.

- *Never* call medicine candy and do not take medications in front of children. *They may imitate you.*
- Discard all old, unused and unlabelled medicine by flushing it down the toilet.
- Keep shampoo, mouthwash, toothpaste, cosmetics, and other personal care items out of the reach of little ones.
- A key should be kept available outside the bathroom if the door has a lock on it.
- Be sure visitors in your home do not leave suitcases containing pills, shampoos and other supplies open for children to explore.
- Keep a list of the plants in your home and garden in case of ingestion by a child or a pet.
- Tobacco and alcoholic drinks, *even in small amounts*, are dangerous to children and pets. After a party, be sure to properly dispose of smoking materials, including butts and ashes. All unfinished alcoholic beverages should be poured down the drain.

### ***Recognizing a Harmful Substance Exposure***

It is not always easy to recognize if someone has been poisoned. Unless the person involved tells someone, asks for help, or behaves inappropriately, no one may know that an unintentional poisoning has even occurred.

This is especially true of children. Youngsters are more likely to remain silent because they fear being scolded or punished. Items commonly ingested by children are cough and cold preparations, Ibuprofen, Tylenol and tasty multivitamins.

The most obvious sign of poisoning involving a child may be an open pill bottle, half eaten plant, open container, or the complaint of a "tummy ache." *Watch for unusual behavior or strange mouth odors.*

### ***Emergency Action For Poisoning***

If you suspect that a poisoning has occurred, and it does not appear to be life-threatening, call your local Poison Control Center. They provide around-the-clock advice and assistance with specially-trained nurses and can answer questions or provide information following a toxic exposure. The Poison Center estimates that over 85% of the phone calls they receive for potential harmful substance exposures are handled in the home.

If you suspect that someone's life is in danger following a harmful substance exposure, call 9-1-1 immediately.

### **Swallowed Poison**

Medicine: Do not give *anything* by mouth until calling for advise.

Chemical or Household Products: Unless patient is unconscious, having convulsions, or cannot swallow, give small sips of milk or water immediately, then call for professional advise about whether you should make the patient vomit or not.

**Always keep on hand at home a one ounce bottle of Syrup of Ipecac (available without a prescription). Use only on advise of the Poison Control Center, emergency department, or physician.**

### Poison in the Eye

Flood the eye with lukewarm water poured from a large glass 2 or 3 inches from the eye. Have the patient blink as much as possible while flooding the eye. Do not force the eyelid open.

### Poison on the Skin

Remove contaminated clothing and flood skin with water for 10 minutes. Then wash gently with soap and water rinse. Exception: Dry lime. Brush off first, then flush with water.

### Inhaled Poison

Immediately get the person to fresh air. Avoid breathing fumes. Open doors and windows wide.

Remember, keep your local poison control center number near your telephone, along with the other emergency numbers.