

June 13, 2008

LOCK UP PESTICIDES, PREVENT POISONINGS

Every 13 seconds a poison control center receives a phone call about an unintentional poisoning. Children are at a much greater risk of unintentional poisonings from pesticides and household products. It is essential for parents and caregivers to lock up all pesticides, including farm, acreage and household products. Last year a caller from Crete needed a quick plant identification which I helped with. A youth ate nightshade berries, a poisonous plant. The Children's Poison Center in Omaha was a great resource when this happened and no further medical assistance was needed.

Prevent pesticide poisonings by storing all pesticides safely. If possible, store them locked up in a separate room or building and post a warning sign on the locked storage area. If nothing else is available, use a locked cabinet. Avoid stacking pesticide containers and shipment boxes. Use metal shelving instead of wood to avoid absorption if a spill occurs. Store all pesticide products in their original containers. Never reuse pesticide containers.

Be prepared for accidental pesticide spills in storage areas and have a spill kit available. Know the three "Cs" for pesticide:

- * Control: If a spill or leak occurs, control the spill to prevent further spillage or leakage.
- * Contain: To keep spills from spreading, use absorbent materials such as kitty litter. After spills soak into the kitty litter, carefully clean up the spilled pesticide and absorbent material.
- * Clean-up: Transfer the pesticide and materials into plastic bags and dispose of them according to label instructions. When cleaning up spills, use chemical resistant gloves and other protective clothing and equipment as needed.

Also, help prevent pesticide poisonings by always applying pesticides safely. Read the label. Follow all directions carefully. Make sure that children stay away from mixing, loading or application zones. Pesticide residues are likely to get on clothing, truck and tractor cabs and other areas. Remove pesticide-contaminated shoes before entering the home. Always remove contaminated clothing and wash thoroughly before coming into contact with children and other family members. Don't mix pesticide-contaminated clothing with family laundry. Take steps to avoid moving pesticide residues from truck and tractor cabs into clean areas, such as inside the home.

Remember to prevent pesticide poisonings by teaching children about pesticides and encouraging them to ask questions. Pesticides can seem harmless to children. They may see them as food or drink. Teach them to ask an adult before they eat or drink anything.

The National Poison Center hotline is 1-800-222-1222. In Nebraska-Wyoming only, call 1-800-955-9119.

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