

## Medical Meanderings— Childhood Emergencies

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(Editor's note: This is the second of five clip-and-save articles on childhood emergencies.)

More than one million poisonings occur in the U.S. every year - 71 percent of these are in children under five. Fortunately, the number of deaths from these accidents seems to be decreasing. This is due to parents being better informed about the dangers, childproof caps on containers, and better medical care through poison control centers. We still have a long way to go, though.

What can parents do to 1) prevent poisonings in their children; and 2) do the right thing if their child ingests poison?

The first thing is to understand what medicines and chemicals are most commonly ingested by young children. The obvious answer is children take whatever is around them - medicines such as aspirin, cold remedies and vitamins. Chemicals in the home are also taken, like bleach, gasoline, lye, turpentine, insecticides, perfume, paint, moth balls, nail polish and ammonia. These are used daily and often left out within easy reach of an exploring toddler.

In small doses, the medicines may be helpful, but in larger doses, they can cause serious harm or even death. For example, a 30-pound two-year old need take only nine adult aspirin to cause a very serious, possibly fatal, overdose. Newborn infants are even more sensitive to the effects of chemicals and drugs. A two-week-old infant died after receiving one baby aspirin (1/4 grain) every four hours for three days for colic. Ever wonder why you need a prescription to get most anti-histamines or pain pills? That same 30-pounder need only down ten of a parent's 50 mg Benadryl capsules to be in serious trouble. Likewise, only three Darvon 65 mg tablets would be a very dangerous overdose for him.

Why do these things get ingested by small children? 1) They are left out in plain sight, such as on a bathroom shelf. 2) They are kept in old bottles or cans instead of original containers. 3) They are left in unlocked cupboards. 4) The safety lids are left off, or put back on improperly.

Children need to learn to respect drugs and other chemicals. They should not be bribed by being told medicine is "candy". Parents who take medicines should do so in private - kids are great imitators. Potentially dangerous chemicals should be kept on shelves far out of children's reach, locked up if possible. Medicine cabinets should be regularly cleaned out - all unused drugs should be thrown away. They should also be locked. 75 percent of all poisonings occur with drugs or chemicals left out in view. A full three fourths of all poisonings could be prevented simply by putting all household products out of sight and reach!

suspect your child took something that might be harmful?

1) Call your family physician, local hospital or the Oregon Poison Control Center immediately. (This number is 1-800-452-7165, toll free. Write it on or near your phone now.)

2) Dilute the poison by giving one or two glassfuls of water, but not carbonated liquids.

3) Induce vomiting if directed UNLESS the child is unconscious, having fits, can't sit or stand, or the poison was a strong corrosive like lye, or contained petroleum products (gasoline, etc.) To induce vomiting, give one tablespoon of Ipecac followed by at least one cup of water. Give less Ipecac if the child is under one year old. This can be repeated after twenty minutes if it doesn't work, but no more after that. Don't waste time waiting for vomiting to occur. Hop in the car and bring the

child to the nearest emergency room with two things. First, bring a container for the child to vomit into, and save this for the doctor to check.

Second, BRING THE PILLS, BOTTLE, ETC. THAT THE CHILD TOOK, with the label intact. If it was pills, try to find out how many were

missing before the ingestion occurred.

Sometimes petroleum products such as antifreeze and benzene can be harmful if

spilled on the skin, so always change the child's clothes and wash off the skin thoroughly in these cases before coming to the hospital.

Poisonings are frightening to any parent, but with care

and forethought, most can be prevented. If a poisoning does happen you will feel much better knowing what to do. If you don't have Ipecac at home get some today at any

drugstore.

The next two articles in this series will deal with injuries and nosebleeds, and the final one will be that - a final exam to see how much you learned.

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at All Saints Sun.

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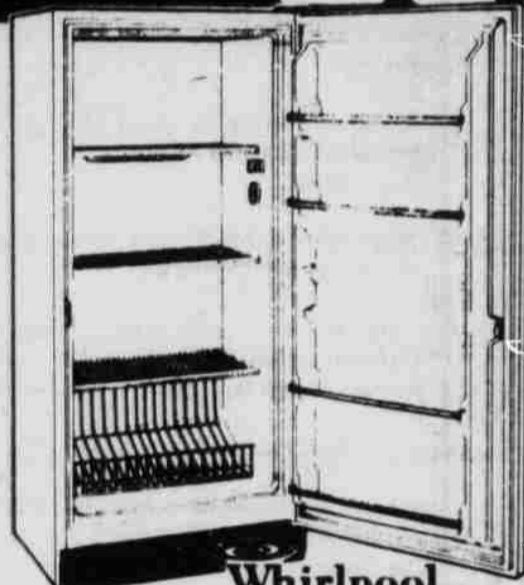
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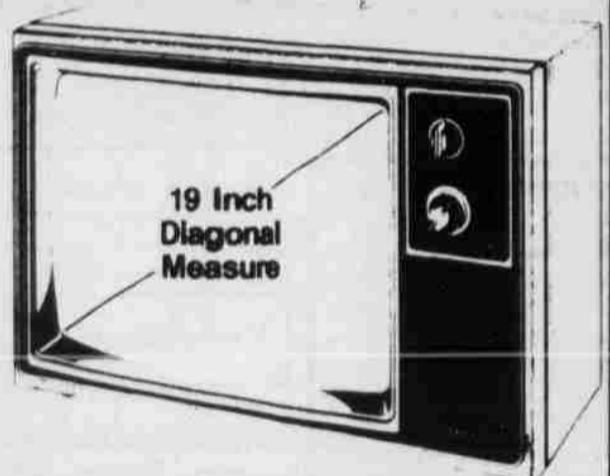
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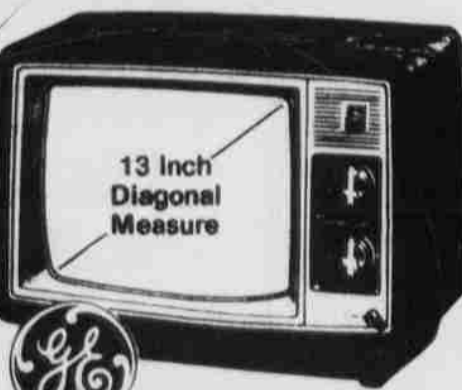
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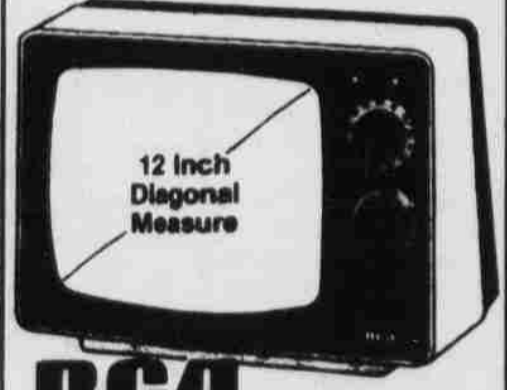
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