

## FEATURED THIS ISSUE

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## Poison Centers Offer Tips on a Safe Back-to-School Season

For all kids, returning to school is filled with possibilities. But for preteens, teenagers and college students in particular, it can also be filled with potential dangers. By talking to your children about substances that can harm them, you can help them get the best experience out of their prime learning years.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network and the American Association of Poison Control Centers offer the following tips on back-to-school dangers.

- Prescribed and used correctly, prescription medications have legitimate uses and positive results. But prescription pain medicine, also known as opioids, are commonly misused and abused among all age groups. Opioids can slow the body's systems down to the point where a person stops breathing. Other potential dangers include ADHD drugs like Adderall® and Ritalin®, which are abused as "brain boosters" or "academic enhancers." Misusing or abusing them could lead to an increased heart rate, restlessness, seizures and difficulty breathing.
- It may be easy to discount the seriousness of alcohol use among teens and college kids. Don't. What might seem like lighthearted teenage ex-

perimentation can contribute to academic failure, violence, injuries, sexual assaults and death. Alcohol toxic-

ity can be fatal or could result in permanent brain damage. Signs include mental confusion, low body temperature, coma, irregular or decreased breathing, and pale or bluish skin. Excessive alcohol use can lead to vomiting and unconsciousness. Talk to your teen and college student about drinking and its consequences. People who start drinking at a young age are more likely to become an alcoholic.



- The dangers of inhalants are real --- and deadly. These substances, which can include solvents and gases that are abused to get a high, are increasingly common among children ages 10 to 12, and are a special concern because kids can die the first, tenth or hundredth time they sniff or huff. Tweens or teens can experience toxic effects like a dazed appearance, slurred speech, nose bleeds and loss of muscle control. Look for unusually large collections of paint, spray cans, or room deodorizers and notice red eyes or chemical smells on the breath or clothing. Be wary of the dangers of

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# Trick-or-Treating Without Trouble

While Halloween is typically one of the highlights of a child's year, it can be less fun for parents, who fret about everything from buying or making the right costume to the safety of the goodies in the trick-or-treat bag.

With that in mind, the Florida Poison Information Center Network and the American Association of Poison Control Centers offer a few tips aimed at making the spookiest time of the year a little less frightening for parents:

- Inspect all treats before the kids eat them. Eat only treats in original and unopened wrappers. If wrappers are faded, have holes, tears or signs of re-wrapping, throw them away. Throw away all unwrapped candy or treats.
- Look out for Rover's well-being, too. Some treats, such as chocolate, can be poisonous for pets.
- Be wary of dry ice. While dry ice is a great special effect for a party, keep small pieces of it out of individual drink glasses. Dry ice can cause frostbite if it comes in contact with the skin or mouth.
- Not all Halloween hazards are poison-related! Put trick-or-treaters in brightly colored costumes

made of flame-resistant materials. Add some reflective tape on trick-or-treat bags to make sure your child is visible after it gets dark.

- Carry a flashlight after the sun goes down, and make sure excited trick-or-treaters don't inadvertently wander in the way of passing cars.
- Stay in local and familiar neighborhoods. Send an adult with young children.
- Keep candle-lit Jack-o-Lanterns off doorsteps and out of the way of foot traffic. Fire hazards could be a danger to trick-or-treaters dealing with long or cumbersome costumes.

For questions about poisons on Halloween and any other day of the year, call your local poison control center at 1 (800) 222-1222.



## Happy --- and Safe --- Hunting

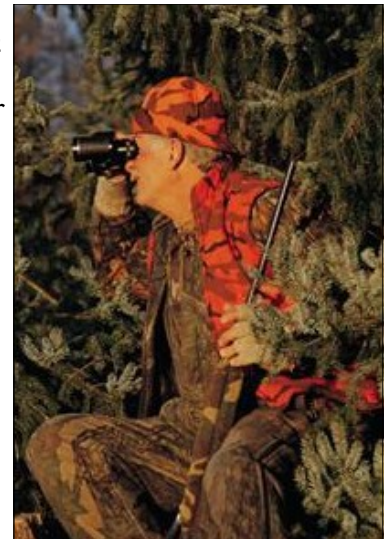
Hunting, while a rewarding hobby for many, is full of inherent dangers, and not just from the prey.

With the start of hunting season in many states this month, the Florida Poison Information Center Network and the American Association of Poison Control Centers offer a few tips on making the hunting season less toxic:

- Gun bluing protects guns from rust and corrosion. But those same products can be fatal to a small child who might mistake this liquid for a soft drink. Gun bluing contains a variety of acids and other chemicals which can cause serious burns and damage to several of the body's organs. Store bluing and other rust and corrosion prevention chemicals in a locked cabinet or out of a child's reach.
- Keep children away from gun powder solvents and gun lubricants. Those products contain alcohols and petroleum, which are also dangerous if swallowed by a young child. Store gun powder solvents and gun lubricants in a locked cabinet or out of a child's reach.
- Be wary of animals that could prey on you. Snakes, spiders and ticks all pose a possible fatal threat to hunters. Wear long sleeves and long pants to guard against bites, and keep an eye out for these sometimes tiny threats.
- After killing your game, field dress the meat as soon as possible. Cool meat as soon as you can to improve the

meat's quality and decrease the chances of food poisoning. If you freeze your game, thaw and rinse it before cooking. Cook it thoroughly and never allow cooked game to sit for prolonged periods or without refrigeration.

- Don't forget the invisible killer ... carbon monoxide ... which is a major contributor to hunters' deaths each year. Hunters who camp and use heating devices in enclosed spaces or who go back to their vehicles to warm up and accidentally fall asleep with their motors running can become victims of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Don't burn heaters in unventilated spaces, don't warm your hands and feet at the exhaust pipe of your vehicle, and always remember that fresh air is the best treatment for carbon monoxide exposure.



# Cadmium, Lead and Keeping Kids Safe

Six months ago the word “cadmium” probably didn’t mean much to most people. These days, though, cadmium is quickly becoming a household name.

Cadmium is a metal used in the manufacturing of batteries, dyes, glasses, and ceramics, and is one of two main culprits responsible for huge recalls of toys and children’s products. Products containing cadmium are not harmful to touch but can be harmful if they are put in the mouth or swallowed, which can result in a poisoning. Since children are often putting things in their mouths, they are considered an at-risk age group.

Lead, the second culprit, is a more commonly known threat and can be poisonous if absorbed in the body through breathing or swallowing. Lead poisoning can happen gradually or through large exposures.

The Florida Poison Information Center Network and the American Association of Poison Control Centers offer the following tips aimed at preventing cadmium and lead poisoning.

- Read product ingredient labels before purchasing an item, especially if it’s intended for children. Avoid products that do not have ingredient lists available.
- Keep small items out of children’s reach. These items can be choking hazards but also can contain toxins such as cadmium or lead.
- Make sure children wash hands thoroughly after playing and before eating.
- Be aware: Currently, there are no federal laws regulating manufacturers’ use of cadmium in children’s jew-

elry. In some cases, companies use cadmium as a substitute for lead since the United States bans the use of



lead in manufacturing children’s products or toys.

- Take an inventory of possible lead sources in the home even though regulations are tighter. These sources may include lead paint used in older homes (before 1978), drinking water from lead pipe plumbing, toys made outside of the country, contaminated herbal supplements, and small weights (like fishing lures).
- Be particularly aware of the dangers of lead poisoning in small children: Unborn babies, infants, and toddlers are most vulnerable to the effects of chronic lead exposure.

If you are concerned that your child might have come into contact with a product containing cadmium or lead, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 or your child’s doctor.

## Back-to-School

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“huffing” and **DON’T** tolerate experimentation.

- Energy drinks contain large doses of caffeine. Some contain additional stimulants promoted to increase energy, enhance mood and delay sleep. The amount of caffeine in many energy drinks is much greater than the amount found in soda and is often much greater than the amount found in a cup of coffee.

Florida’s three poison centers, comprising the Florida Poison Information Center Network, are accredited by the AAPCC who supports the nation’s 60 poison control centers in their efforts to prevent poisoning. Poison centers offer free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you believe you’ve been exposed to a poison or have questions about whether a substance is poisonous, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.



This newsletter is brought to you by the Florida Poison Information Center Network and was produced with assistance from the American Association of Poison Control Centers and local poison centers around the country.

When you dial 1-800-222-1222, your call is answered by a medical professional with special training in poisoning management. Help is fast, free, confidential, and available 24-hours a day, every day.

# The Poison Garden

Murder mysteries such as *White Oleander* describe dramatic deaths from poisonous plants. Over 2,000 people each year ask Florida's Poison Centers for help in poisoning cases involving plants. In one hospital case, a man ate a glory lily flower bulb, thinking it was an onion. The unfortunate man died several days later of liver and kidney failure. Mushroom ingestions are serious enough to merit hospital observation for the majority of cases. Teens run the risk of harvesting deadly mushrooms in their search for hallucinogenic psilocybin species. A boy who drank mushroom tea became comatose and was placed on life support. He narrowly escaped death after receiving a liver transplant. Rosary peas are a potentially deadly arts and craft item. People drill holes through the hard-shelled peas to string necklaces, unaware that this allows poison to be absorbed if swallowed. A woman that ate several of these peas required blood transfusions after suffering intestinal bleeding. Encounters with pencil cactus plants send many people to hospitals. When this species of cactus is cut or broken, burns can develop when sap gets into the eyes.

Fortunately, most calls to Poison Centers involve plants that are not very toxic. Common houseplants (arrowhead, caladium, dieffenbachia, elephant ear, philodendron and pothos) cause immediate pain if the leaves are chewed. In one year, Florida's poison centers received over 240 calls about preschoolers who had eaten plants of this type. These children developed swollen lips and oral pain. If a leaf is swallowed, irritation of the gastrointestinal tract can result in vomiting. An ice pop or cold drink often helps reduce swelling and these children can generally be treated at home.

The plant that causes the most curiosity is poison ivy. Although the "leaves of three, let it be" phrase provides a clue, it's often not helpful for identification purposes in the wild.

Poison ivy vines entwine through other plants, making them difficult to distinguish. Once poison ivy is touched, the plant's oil binds with skin tissue quickly. If the oil isn't washed off within 15 min-

utes, the development of the itchy rash can't be prevented. Prevention measures include using barrier creams or wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Treatment goals focus on using over-the-counter products to reduce itching and secondary infection.

Make sure your home is "poison-safe" by removing toxic plants from play areas. If children and pets live in the home, make plant stakes of labels with each plant's common name. For any problems if someone has touched or tasted a plant, call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. Poison specialists are available 24/7 to assess each situation and provide expert advice. For more information, log on to [www.fpicn.org](http://www.fpicn.org) or <http://gardeninglaunchpad.com/poisonous.html>.



Arrowhead



Caladium



Dieffenbachia



Elephant Ear



Glory Lily



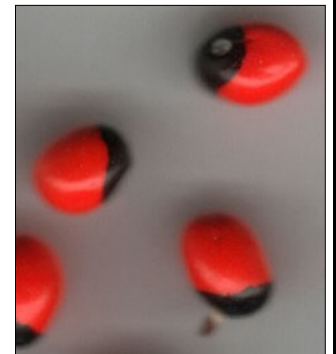
Philodendron



Poison Ivy



Pothos



Rosary Pea

florida's poison centers  
Children's Medical Services

Florida's three poison centers, comprising the Florida Poison Information Center Network, are accredited by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. The Florida Poison Information Center Network serves Florida's residents and health care professionals and consists of poison centers located in Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa. The Florida Poison Information Center Network is a cooperative effort between the three poison centers and their affiliated medical and academic institutions, including Shands Jacksonville Medical Center, University of Florida College of Medicine; Jackson Memorial Hospital, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; and Tampa General Hospital. The Poison Center Network is primarily funded by a grant from Children's Medical Services, Florida Department of Health.